

THE HONORABLE
MISS CHERRY
BLOSSOM



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THE HONORABLE
MISS CHERRY BLOSSOM

THE HONORABLE MISS CHERRY BLOSSOM

A NOVEL

BY

LUELLEN TETERS BUSSENIUS



NICHOLAS L. BROWN
NEW YORK MCMXXIV

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*The Honorable
Miss Cherry Blossom*

RCB. May 14, 25

CHAPTER I

“**B**ANDI! Bandi! Four million years of happiness. Bandi!” The shrill cry of chubby children by the roadside arose hospitably, as fat, grimy little hands lifted high in greeting. A procession of young girls, musumees, pigeon-stepping in their wooden clogs or getas, tottered by, their black looped hair glistening with camellia oil, picturesque in their rainbow kimonos. Out in the middle of the streets types were endless and varied: hawkers of sweet paste, the moji-yaki, or letter burner, whose unpalatable cakes aim to attract those sentimentally inclined by their cardiacal shaping; with impressive skill, artistic though it only consisted in blowing wonderful rabbits and monkeys from a mixture of dough, the jelly man held his culinary triumphs aloft so that they might be viewed with covetousness.

Working patiently in the traces with half-naked leg men or coolies—great splendid fellows whose brown flesh, thick with sinews of strength, glistened as bronze under drops of moisture—were pleasant-faced old women, happy at being thus favored by the gods, their shapeless forms clad in faded blue trousers and jackets, to give better agility, their backs bent under heavy boxes as some unfamiliar beasts of burden. Through the panorama drifted groups of students, their pale faces

testifying to hours of sedentary tasks, their closely cropped heads crowned peculiarly by flat, odd caps, and scarlet socks providing unexpected contrast to their sombre attire. Fortune tellers, figuratively juggling with fate, tossed their little blocks of red and black wood in the air with careful precision.

Immature girls of tender years, the little mothers of Japan, clustered in curious groups, their backs doubled under the lusty burdens they carried of the babies of the family, strapped knapsack fashion across the shoulders.

Women working, everywhere, old, withered, leaping with agility over bales on the carts, supporting ponderous loads above their heads. It was menial, deprived of any of the friendly footing of equality, even in these labors.

It shadowed some of the picturesque features of the brilliant panorama of human activity and color spread before the eyes.

This was Tokio—if you came by the Shimbashi, in the Tsukiji quarter. The big artery of human contrasts, the street, possessed a character to be reckoned with, potential in its influences: baffling, absorbing, lurid, tempting, nowhere is life more conglomerate, more heterogeneous, than on the Ginza, which has been graphically called the Regent Street of this imperial city of Dai Nippon. For priest and infidel rub elbows in its ever-moving crowds, the flaunting purple and scarlet silk folds of the garb of the favorites of the Yoshiwara mingle with the stainless, undefiled robes of virginity. Eyes bleared by more than experience, faces loathsome with the cruel imprint of reckless squandering of youth;

hideous half-old men and women meet the gaze, undisturbed at the horror they arouse. Beauty there is, too, in the mellow rhythm of the temple bells, the soft vaporous curl of incense, a glint of redness and gold, in smart trickeries of cloisonné, of ivory, of lacquer, of richly carved leathers, and the inevitable teakwood. One can buy everything along the Ginza—even to a soul.

Life has its values, too. There are pursuits that test the cleverness of the brain, as well as the wrist; gay amusement parlors open to the street, always the tinkle of the koto, or the less musical samisen, never melodious, even under cultivated fingers; for music must be measured by latitude and longitude, and what is the battle hymn of one race easily becomes the requiem of another.

There were numerous other streets in this temperamental, unique abode of the Oriental—strange, mysterious, crooked wanderings, radiating from the center like so many spokes of a wheel, down which flapping garments move, until suddenly swallowed up by the unexpected angle of a corner. Plenty of these there were, assuredly, dignified by the name of thoroughfares, where rickshaws boldly ran on the footpaths, pushing pedestrians to the wall, where dogs barked in fright and pain at kicks that cleared the way—but there was only one Ginza.

One could reach it another way, by the Sakuradogomon, the Cherryfield Gate, coming across the Shiro, that giant masonry at whose feet lazily crept a moat, sleepy with stagnation, where noised bitterns and herons, homing in the thick boughs.

Deering knew nothing of this. He had just arrived by express, and a coolie was pulling his 'rickshaw

through the streets, so narrow in places that the wheels hit against the forms of the hurrying, smiling people. Disappointment lay in his eyes as he looked at the thoroughfares, hideous with brick buildings of familiar foreign architecture, the tops of which bristled irregularly with ugly modern iron chimneys, like the blackened teeth of snarling beasts, to prevent conflagration when the always-feared "jishin," or earthquake, comes. The harshness of the coolies' reiterated cries, "Hai! Hai!", a command for passage and warning, disturbed him remotely.

He had expected old Japan; *Yamata damashii*, old Japan, lay not a stone's throw from him, in the Shiro, but he was unaware of its proximity, in the heart of the city, where the moat curled past the Castle Hill, its banks edged with fringes of willows and the exquisite pink of cherry blossoms in their season; and spanned by quaint historic bridges, giddily adorned with brilliant red and black lacquer to uphold the traditions of their samurai and daimyo.

Once lotus lilies bloomed on the glassy water, but East is West, and lotus lilies and malaria belonged to old Japan and its dreams. For with the Greater Learning for Women in vogue, that book which Japanese maidens now peruse openly, to discard clogs for French heels and picturesque kimonos for corsets and tailored skirts, one must forfeit the flower for the sake of science, though the imperturbable Buddha still embraces its petals as a symbol of immortality, and retains the lotus for rituals of superstition.

"Bandi! Bandi!" The light treble of the children was a relief from the tuneless jargon of older voices.

Deering thrust his hand into his pocket and drew forth some coin, scattering it generously over the dark cropped heads. Oblique slits of eyes regarded him gravely, even with fear; it was evident they had not expected such liberal treatment from the Honorable Mr. Foreigner. But youth is youth, regardless of geographical differences, and fat little legs, unsteady in their clogs, ran after the sweet paste man to indulge in sins of veniality and appetite.

"Four million years of happiness," chirped their fresh young voices, in a valedictory. Deering smiled with fine cynicism, in disbelief; two, even one, would be all he would require, if happiness could be secured so easily. He was prepared to moralize, but the coolie jerked him significantly before the frail toy bamboo house where Edwards lived, hanging like an unsupported bird's nest to the side of the steep hill. Outwardly it resembled its surrounding neighbors, which were grouped around it somewhat in the fashion of a mother hen and its brood. A glimpse within open doors revealed the sliding windows, or shoji; the tatami, or floor mats, were stainless, and Deering glanced uncomfortably at the remnants of dust and cinders on his shoes, for he understood that no step was allowed to profane such spotlessness. There was a tiny fire box, the hibachi, even so sending out a cloud of faintly blue smoke—or was it incense? The inevitable pot of flowers stood on the inevitable bamboo stand; and the shrine of Buddha, the Butsumono—where every plaint of the heart is uttered with supreme faith, from the tragedies of the household, burnt rice cakes, and indigestible bread—to the despair of the soul, tramping toward Nirvana, released

ever and anon to undergo earthly pilgrimage, working out its destiny.

It also proved something else; it was the existence of feminine atmosphere in Edward's house, for the Butsumono represents chiefly the devotions of women.

Edwards himself, with a hearty vociferous greeting and a warm clasping of arms, rushed out, older, greyer, a tinge of restraint withal in his manner that sat peculiarly upon him. He bore him into the tiny house, not allowing him to put himself to such discomfort as to remove his shoes, talking, laughing all in one breath, and covering a lapse of three years that had separated them. The chairs, what few there were, were stiff and uncomfortable, in spite of the cushions his host piled behind him; but friendship is not influenced by externals, any more than the rain washes off the exquisite lustre of the wings of a butterfly; so they smoked, and chatted, and sipped tepid cups of saké, gradually bringing their reminiscences up to the present. A samisen, faint, discordant, accompanied by a woman's voice, filled in the gaps of conversation which Edwards made awkward attempts to fill. Deering made no comment; he was deeply glad to see his friend, and interested in his suggestions as to the best methods of applying himself in his new home, familiarizing himself with economic conditions that prevailed here. For his host had long held a commercial government position, and his experience was of value. Deering had come to win, and win he must; and it made little difference to him whether it was the management of his father's occidental offices, as it happened to be, or connection with strangers. Perhaps he would have preferred the latter; for failure in

examinations, coupled with an avalanche of college debts, had not tended to convince his father of any latent merit on his part. But though one may flunk at college, there is always open the chance to pass at the Antipodes. There is one trivial qualification, though, and that is that one must determine in advance what should be passed. Climate undoubtedly rules the senses, and in the tropics love is of much more importance than learning.

Knowing his parent's idiosyncrasies, in order to be permitted to go to Japan, Deering proposed India; for by nature contrary, the older man immediately vetoed such daring. Besides, he had no desire to assume business obligations at such remote distance. Japan was nearer. He had already made connections there, with the intention of establishing a branch. In its infancy, placing his son in charge, he could not lose much, for he as yet had no belief in his acumen and ability. He wondered as to the reason Jack wished to go to India—but he failed to suspect why the suggestion of Japan had not been rejected.

Ever since a Presidential appointment put Mr. Horace Denton in charge of the embassy, and the entire Denton family, Grace, the Irish cook, Pomeranians, and Cousin Em (Mrs. Denton's widowed sister), young Deering had suppressed a violent desire to follow, biding his time for the psychological opportunity; and it had arrived. It was more than a reason; influenced by his repressed sentiment for Grace, it was an inducement.

The unmusical samisen tinkled louder; a woman was singing in the little enclosure in the rear.

‘Come, let us dance the Dance of the Honorable
Garden . . .

Chan, Chan,

Cha, Cha.

Yoitomosé—

Yoitomosé—

Chan, Chan, Chan.

Come, let us dance the Dance of the Honorable
Garden. . .”

Edwards arose with a red face and pushed the shoji or sliding window in place to shut out the sounds. He hesitated, then thrust his hands into his pockets with small embarrassment.

“I might as well tell you, Deering, old boy,” he burst forth, awkwardly. “That’s my honorable wife—by adoption. You see, over here it’s very simple—and much nicer than a cook. There’s no trouble then about arranging the work or managing a house, for one unaccustomed to the ways of a country. Oh, it’s quite respectable, I assure you. A lot of fine fellows do it here, men of the highest standing at home. There’s little alternative, you see. The mothers arrange it and are glad to get the money it brings in. A mother with several daughters manages to live very nicely hiring out wives this way. I admit to our puritanical western standards it sounds hateful, yet these girls lose no respect by doing it, or even by going into the Yoshiwara—that institution sanctioned by the government, where girls of splendid family can go in order to support their parents. I am not excusing it, remember, Jack. Neither am I condemning it. I don’t think we westerners have that right. It’s the custom here. Just as with us we

resent the foreigners' questioning our habits, so here the same feeling exists. It is safer to keep out of it and adopt the customs. I am sure that what you or I think would count for nothing, anyway, here, when centuries of practise uphold it. And you must keep in mind that the position of woman, as an individual, this side of the hemisphere is not what it is with us; she is an inferior being, valuable chiefly because of her propagating, and comes last compared to the male; father first, then husband, sons, son-in-law, grandson. Can you wonder that to be a hired wife of Honorable Mr. Foreigner is an arrangement that most of them strive to make? For it means absolute independence, comforts and an income."

"I admit that it means all of that," Deering replied, seeing that his friend expected some comment from him, "but you have omitted the most important thing of all that it actually means—something that in our country would brand you both as violators of the law, something that, no matter if it is sanctioned by custom in this part of the globe for the woman to share in, yet it condemns her always to that stigma and robs her of what women of civilized countries hold most priceless of all."

"You mean——" Edwards paused, a bit taken back by Deering's hostile denunciation.

"This is what I mean," his friend said with emphasis. "You're my friend, Edwards, and forgive me if I hurt you. But you, the man, civilized, know how you are wronging her. She is doing nothing wrong, according to our highest ethics, unaware that the custom of her land, which sanctions her living without ceremony with you, is all wrong. Her mind is innocent. She is

not immoral in what she does through ignorance. But you know better. Therefore, I cannot condemn her. But I do blame you."

"But Jack, old friend, surely you didn't come all this distance here to quarrel with me, just because I comply with a custom of a foreign country, as hundreds of other men no better than I do? It's foolish, old boy. You'll be the laughing stock with your musty, ancient ideas. I claim the privileges accorded my sex all over the world. According to custom, I am not sinning. Neither is she, according to the customs which uphold her." He arose, chafing under the criticism; his short, wadded silk jacket such as all Japanese gentlemen wear indoors, lent him a distinct foreign appearance, which his dark hair and eyes augmented. His slippers were noiseless over the bare floor.

"Come, you shall see her. She's a dainty little thing. They're all alike, no soul, no emotion—just like dolls." He stepped to the sliding window at the rear, calling gently:

"O-Sono-san! O-Sono-san!" He turned to Deering, who was regarding him with grave eyes. "Her name is Flower Garden, and she is really a very nice little thing."

There was a stir at the opening, the removing of clogs, and a small form glided in silently in white stockinged feet. The sun slanted in through the shoji, a beam falling on her glistening coal-black hair, and caught up the irridescent splendor of metal threads in the gay rose obi on her soft green kimono. Her narrow, inscrutable eyes raised swiftly to the visitor and were promptly lowered.

"Ohayo," she murmured politely, which was quite in accordance with the code, as prescribed in the Book of Greater Learning for Women. Her black head bowed in servile obeisance. She retreated gracefully, until her tiny form disappeared through the aperture leading into the next room, and the beams of the sun seemed to have departed with her, held by her lustrous metal threads.

Deering said nothing; he knew Edwards was studying his face, trying to decipher his disapproval.

"It's not harming either one of us, Jack," he finally spoke, in defense of his position. "If I didn't have her, some other Honorable Foreigner would; or worse, one of her own countrymen. I don't beat her, as many of her friends do their chattel, and I allow her freedom. You must remember that customs differ in different countries. There is nothing truer than that statement that morality is merely a matter of geography. The Orientals have always given greater consideration to the care of the soul than to the care of the body—for they believe the body is only a dwelling place in which the soul must live while on earth. To them, it is what they call the City of the Nine Gates. There is nothing vicious in their customs—men and women bathe together quite frankly. In fact, if you go inland, as you probably will, you will notice the friendly visits that go on in bath tubs, drawn to the door. There is no race more cleanly in their bodily practices. I've thought the whole thing over and can see nothing wrong in what I am doing. Someday, when I have finished my labors here, I'll return home, and it will be only a memory. Life gives little that we retain, at best."

"And what of her?" Deering blew the smoke carelessly from his mouth, his gaze direct on his friend. The expression of the girl's eyes conveyed a subtle, tragic sadness. He felt a peculiar commiseration for her as he would have entertained for a wounded feathered songstress.

Edwards shrugged his shoulders expressively.

"What becomes of any of them?" He waved his hands with an expansive gesture. "Passed on to another, perhaps. They're very proud of being proficient, even in this relation. Emotion is only superficial with them. Life, love, grief, it's all mechanical, not even scratching the skin. There would be another master for her. . . ."

"I think she loves you," Deering said with bluntness, searching his face for any betraying signs. Edwards laughed lightly. Somehow, its sheer indifference irritated his friend, and he turned away, pretending to scan the panorama of lavender-shrouded buildings below the hill, their bristling, ugly tops, touched with resplendent glory so that their angular outlines were softened by the magic.

"Pretty nice, all that, isn't it?" Edwards had come up behind him. Together they stepped outside for a better view. A bell rang melodiously from a temple somewhere near; the pungency of incense clung to the air.

"*Namu Amida Butsu*"—Devout voices were intoning, in a soothing, monotonous chant.

Deering forgot his surroundings in his abstraction. His senses all at once leapt at the thought that soon he would see Grace. He had conquered all limitations of

distance that had separated him; it was almost unbelievable. He was near her, with only a tangible barrier between them. He had all of the impatience of passion to subdue to talk coherently as Edwards plied him with many inquiries concerning many mutual interests at home. It was very difficult when his whole being was seething in a foment of love and eagerness, and he counted the minutes until he could be with her.

Flower Garden considered herself favored by the gods. Her *danna san* was very kind to her, giving her money which he never counted to purchase her wardrobe and pay for all of her worldly prayers for happiness. She fingered absently an inexpensive little trinket he had bestowed on her, which her credulity had magnified into great value. Surely her *danna san* loved her if he could so generously reward her. Surreptitiously her little black eyes followed every move of the Honorable Mr. Foreigner who had just arrived, admiring his proportions and the deferential manner he evinced toward her. There had often been guests in the tiny bird-nest cottage, but they had laughed at her and said things to her *danna san* at which he would get up and angrily walk up and down the small floor space, his face clouded, with rising color; and he would then be very curt and cross with her, sending her off on errands that were fictitious.

Perhaps new *danna san* would also need a wife while he stayed in Japan; if so, she knew where he could get one without any delay; and she was the best that ever could be found, as she had much experience in knowing exactly what would please him, for she had had three

other *danna san*. And surely that was recommendation in itself to any Honorable Mr. Foreigner.

Deering on his part was not unaware of her stealthy scrutiny of him, but he did not suspect the matrimonial tangle her little brain was winding around him. And he tried to reconcile her duties with those of the clever little housewife she appeared to be, following Edwards with interest into the kitchen, amazed at her dexterity and alacrity, as she darted around like some unique humming bird in her sparkling kimono, and broiled American chops dexterously over the toy charcoal fire sunken in the floor.

She silently followed Deering out after they had enjoyed their European dinner, which had been faultlessly served, plucking timidly at his coat sleeve while Edwards' back was turned as he sought his tobacco jars and pipes.

"Honorable Mr. Foreigner have nice home like this." She looked frankly into his eyes, holding him in surprise as much at her abrupt speech as at her proximity. "Lots of girls like *danna san*. They treat Japanese girls very, very good, and buy them many rings and kimonos. And they give them plenty of food to eat, always the same as *danna san* eats. I know White Butterfly. . . . She is a much lady, for she has lived in many big places, and always with a different *danna san*. No one so fine as Butterfly. . . . She knows so much how to please her *danna san*—and one never in a book can learn it."

"Off, Flower Garden," Edwards cried goodnaturedly, pushing her gently out of the room by the arm. "Honorable Mr. Foreigner does not want any Japanese wife; go to your dishes, and here is a yen for a new hair

pin." He tossed a coin lightly on the floor and she quickly picked it up in childish delight.

"She would make a perfect Japanese wife for *danna san*," Flower Garden cried as she gracefully retreated, persuaded by the temptation of a new bauble. "White Butterfly always puts her *danna san* first, and always does she not understand the world at all. Her voice is very gentle even when she is angry, and she writes very beautiful verses, too."

CHAPTER II

SUMMING up the events of the day, his visit to the Embassy, and his meeting with Grace, Deering made two deductions which left him greatly disturbed. One was that Grace was unmistakably ill at ease at seeing him and that Major Lynde, an elderly asthmatic individual addicted to low collars and iced beverages, was apparently persona grata there. This surprised him, being aware of Grace's exactions in masculine standards, and it was not jealousy alone that prevented him from finding anything that could appeal to sentiment in the Major's expansive presence, his over-flushed face and indolent little eyes. Yet, looking at him suddenly, Deering was peculiarly impressed by a hint of sadness, a meditative abstraction that took him away from all present; but such lapses on the Major's part were rare, and he shook off his retrospections hastily, perhaps, though, with a greater recurrence than ever to his cups. He had explained his visit as being solely for pleasure and rest, and acquainted with relatives of the Ambassador in his native town, he had been accepted quite as one of the household.

Deering had been visibly disappointed in the reception Grace gave him. It was not over a year ago, before the hegira of the Dentons toward Japan, that their boy and girl friendship had seemingly culminated in the

usual romance; at least, so they thought at the time, and with Deering the belief had grown until it had been his protection against small temptations since she left. For love likes nothing better than sacrifices—which often are in vain.

Chagrined now, his pride suffering under her coldness, he relapsed into an indifference that made him seem as the casual stranger she wished him to be. There had been a few minutes alone, after the first surprise of greetings, as he had been announced by a native servant very formally, and incorrectly, as a French general who was seeking an audience with the Ambassador at the same time; but when Grace saw him ushered into the drawing room, she stood for the second very still, her face alternately red and white, her fragile porcelain beauty glowing and paling; but there was no actual emotion of pleasure or love reflected in it. He was presented to the family circle, Cousin Em recalling to him, between puffs at her cigarette, that his bulldog chased her pet Angora up a tree, and he had retorted that it perhaps evened up matters, for Waddles had been badly scratched in the face; this, and other banal pleasantries got him over the first awkwardness of his call, for he had gradually become aware of a cold subtlety in Grace's demeanor. It seemed like a protest against any presumption on his part in loving her. And he chafed under the falsity of his position, for he had come over a thousand miles solely to see her, expectant of announcing their engagement, as an incentive for a desired triumph in business.

His pride was affronted, and it succeeded in arousing a tiny flame of rebellion against her hauteur. As the

guests, with members of the family, straggled desultorily into the garden—towards the Shinto Temple at one end, where Mrs. Denton loved to have tea served on sunny days—he lagged behind until the Major's broad blue back made a convenient screen. He caught Grace's hand impulsively as she passed with cushions for the stone benches. She withdrew it hastily, as if fearful that his indiscretion might have been witnessed.

"Grace!" Her inexplicable action hurt him more than her indifference.

"We're not children any longer, Jack," she said primly, moving on.

"That's exactly why it is serious," he protested hotly, in defense.

"We're both grown up." He did not attempt to repeat the offense; yet he had longed for the cool velvet of her hands, the satin of her hair to stroke, all the long tedious trip. "I wouldn't for the world hold you to a promise you didn't mean, dear," he added gently, surprised at his own calmness.

"I'm sure Dad would never consent—now," she said, hesitatingly, not looking at him. "We're both very young, and things have changed. And neither of us is sure we've made the right choice——"

"Oh, Grace——" he started to protest, but his vehemence was checked by her expression of displeasure as she rushed by in the gloom of the corridor, as if intent on ending the interview.

It kept him awake, thinking of it, far into the strange Japanese night, while he turned restlessly on the hard floor, unaccustomed to the futon or coverings, donned like a reversed coat; and the uncomfortable wooden

makura, or pillow, that resembled a miniature guillotine. There had been no time to send out for the narrow American bed that most Europeans use, and Deering had rejected Edwards' hospitable profferment of his own.

The incessant whirr of insects, wings beating against the paper night lanterns, rasping noises of the croaking bullfrogs, the flapping of invading bats—he could distinguish most of them, but the sounds were magnified by the stillness of the night.

He resolved not to beguile himself with self pity; his disappointment might be a necessary spur to success, and he would need all of the fortitude he was capable of to endure his experiment for a year. Like all loyal sojourners, he would pay his devoirs regularly at the Embassy, so that Grace would never suspect that her actions could so affect him. Her capriciousness might have arisen from totally different causes. At any rate, since he could not remedy matters, he must make an effort to rise above it. She could never have really cared for him, or there would be some last lingering spark of affection to which he could appeal. But he was too proud to accept charity in love.

The novelty of new surroundings supported him in his decision. There was little time for thinking, in establishing himself in his duties. Edwards, failing to impress him with the advantages of possessing a hired wife, lost no time in securing a bright Satsuma lad from the hills to take charge of the toy house he rented for him, across from his, so near that the morning salutation of *ohayo* could be whispered from piazza to piazza without being overheard. Fuji's proficiency covered little English, but much ambition, as represented in

"First Lessons in Speaking," and a limited acquaintance with cooking; but it sufficed, for Deering was suffering too much in those first few days, heart sick over his self-deception, to notice what Fuji set before him. And it was all the same to him whether he ate the honorable rice or the less honorable bean curds. Fuji, knowing little English, was addicted to effusive epistles concerning trivial subjects, and if the Honorable Mr. Foreigner was interested in having pickled fish for his dinner, it generally consumed two pages of stationery to convey his desire to please him.

What Deering enjoyed the most was exploring the fascinating streets and parks. And Fuji acted in a different capacity in this, for he had once been a 'rickshaw man for tourists, and knew exactly where to take him. Sometimes Edwards accompanied them, but there were many occasions when he begged off, as Flower Garden had asked him to take her to some Matsuri or festival, and as her small existence depended on these trivial joys, he had not the heart to refuse her.

Edwards had been for many years—relieved by trips home—in the East. Perhaps that accounted for his indolence as to former exacting scruples. And while he was not remiss in any of the social obligations demanded of him, he made no effort to create any. He called once a week at the Embassy, in keeping with the code; he attended the Imperial garden parties when they occurred in April at cherry blossom time, and in November when the chrysanthemums were in bloom; and he had the entré to the famous Maple Club, the Koyokwan, which exclusive organization is open only to men of the highest standing, and guests; and he introduced Deering

there, with as much punctiliousness as he had asked that his name be listed for invitations to the Imperial parties.

Unable to resist the spell of the land, he temporized, drifting with the human tide; and in this, his consular connection gave him much opportunity. For he spent most of it with Flower Garden, amused in spite of himself by the quaint little person; and as the weather grew warm he took her to the hills, to Kobé, to avoid the hot, steaming streets; or farther inland, to some historic shrine. Often there were sails past the rice fields, where barelegged girls worked with the coolies in blue coats, in the water ridges; and she was glad her lot was easier than theirs, and would flash a little grateful smile at him.

Deering soon learned the way alone, and often after his immaculately prepared meal, which was served on an American table, with chairs to sit on—much to the enjoyment of the Satsuma, who practised sitting on each in his master's absence, to accustom himself to the height—he drifted down the hill, his pipe in his mouth, meditating, always thinking. But the exotic lights of the Ginza, that great pulse of human life and emotion, red, green, vividly orange, made him forget it all, and he grew to have a very personal acquaintance with the stall keepers and the parchment-faced sellers of treasures in the shops. One night he stumbled aimlessly into a place he had overlooked before, attracted by its gleaming coppers and the tinged yellow richness of ancient ivories. A shriveled old man, aged in appearance, hobbled towards the entrance, saluting him in deference, for the bigger the sale one wants to make the more polite he must be. But Deering evaded making any purchases,

for he required nothing himself, and it would be stretching whatever friendship still existed between him and Grace to dispatch any gift to her. But he was interested in the garrulous old man's intelligence and his talk which included a very lucid vocabulary of English and a definite knowledge of dollars and cents. High up on a platform or narrow gallery the chief treasures of the shop were kept; the old man, rubbing his thin boney hands, withered finely as the skin of an apple touched by its final frost, pointed silently to these. He related their history and the age of each. Then he made a gesture to one, representing a beautiful maiden, with her hair wreathed with cherry blossoms, and the finely painted kimono showing a similar tracery.

"That is my great treasure," he murmured fervently, making a little obeisance as he muttered a prayer for thankfulness in possessing it, to Buddha. "It is the great Hishigawa."

The name meant nothing to Deering. He had a limited acquaintance with art of any kind, beyond the school of a few moderns. But he admitted its charm, although more intent on the tangible merits of the ivories. The old shopkeeper followed him patiently, repeating his persuasions. The great painter, Hishigawa Kichibei, had been dead many years—200, by counting the Matsuri of the cherry blossoms. He painted people so real that they came to life when they wanted to. He turned his button-black eyes earnestly on Deering. "There was always one beautiful maiden he painted," he said, pointing toward the painting again. "Always but one face. See, there she is again in another frame. She was of his world and not today. He painted birds,

too; and in mating time, when the earth bird sang of love, it stepped out of the frame. I sell it, very cheap."

Deering nodded, not impressed. The picture was uncommonly good, but it was almost as big as his entire house, and were he foolish enough to purchase it, there was no place to hang it. He shook his head, laughingly, in protest, compromising on buying some tiny effigies, the gods of luck, and stepped out again into the radiant street. The gently swaying colored lanterns added to the mystery, the glamor; a whiff of incense, borne through the open door of a temple, made a potent fragrance. The patter of clogs, women with their curious-eyed children strapped like a knapsack to their backs, the pitiful wail of the aged shampooers crying for patronage—there was no other place in the world that offered such contrasts to the eye and ear.

In the stalls opening off the streets, people stood drinking tiny cups of Nippon-cha, a tea of a poisonous pale green color; musicians, picking the strings of the koto, or of the samisen, made discordant noises; the tea houses were gaily illuminated and thronged by crowds of pleasure seekers. There was life, big, bustling, democratic around him, brushing against him. But he had never felt so lonely in all of his existence as he did now in this strange, bewildering city, thrown so unexpectedly and acutely on his self resources.

Irresolute, he hesitated; then he recklessly purchased a box of French candies for Cousin Em—or the Pomeranians might enjoy it—he excused his act with feeble satire; and he hailed a rickshaw for the Embassy. Owing to the presence of guests, the dinner, always formal, had been later than usual in being served that night; but

the ladies had already withdrawn to the garden, and Taka, one of the house servants, was flying excitedly around asking for naps for their honorable shoulders, when he meant wraps—much to the bewilderment of Mrs. Denton's Irish maid, who insisted that he meant "nips."

Deering joined them, glad of Cousin Em's friendly usurpation of him by her side, and her open appreciation of the gift. He strolled along the camellia paths with her, watching the leaping of the golden carp in the fish pond, without which no Japanese garden is complete, and the garden at the Embassy possessed this, in common with many other unique features, which gave it much distinction.

Cousin Em was a comfort for any wound; for she had reached that age when a woman considers comfort before vanity, and preferred flat heels to high ones. And this might be taken as a simile of her philosophy in life. She had been married once, and, as she always apologized, "when very young," as if insinuating that the indiscretion belonged only to the blunders of youth. But her husband, always considering her comfort before his own, politely departed before she had grown to tire of him and his precise ways and rhetorical phrases. As-suaging the demands of convention by a three-months' adoption of bombazine, Cousin Em had quickly checked up his estate, and after satisfying the requirements of propriety, she recklessly squandered her money in an elaborate wardrobe, which she could ill afford, and content in her lavender and grey creations, took up her residence abroad, to compensate for the years she had

let pass without enjoyment. She had indeed been married when very young; in fact, she was barely eighteen when Townsend Forbes, forty and a bachelor, proposed to her at a cotillion and rushed her into the bonds of matrimony within two months. That was always his method with her, the whirlwind, and as rapidly he passed out of her life—and her memory.

Wine must have its effervescence—and she had had hers. But there was no visible manifestation of the lessons she perhaps had learned, excepting the occasional glint of a silver thread in her glossy brown hair or the deflection of her mouth when in repose, trained to suppress feeling, to endure—those burdensome undeserving humiliations man and custom have thrust on woman. She had come to Japan simply because she had no alternative; for her independence eked out with her limited fortune. Her relatives had selected her from among several possible choices, simply because, as Grace aptly expressed it: “Cousin Em fits in so comfortably.”

The quiet air of appropriation she assumed with the Major was obvious, and the most casual observer could not fail to detect it. It did not escape Deering’s eyes, nor was he unaware either of the frown of annoyance on Grace’s face as her relative usurped the corpulent army man’s services and attention, creating duties, with feminine sagacity, to keep him occupied, without his own realization of the little game in which he was playing the pawn.

CHAPTER III

O-SAKURADO, Cherry Blossom, lived not far down a strip of yellow road through the Cherryfield Gate—a road traversed for the most part by clumsy wooden carts, or the wide-wheeled trucks of the big industrial houses. Stony it was, save here and there where a ragged fringe of willow trunks had their sandy beds; often ugly, strange-smelling shops fronted on it, and far off, a yellow rim on the uneven horizon, clouds of dust indicated the strenuous tilling of the tiny symmetrical gardens. For here the truckmen planted and tended and garnered, and sometimes the richness of blooming plants sent fragrance through the air; but more often the odors were repugnant and sickening.

But Yuri, Lily-mother, could not afford a better location, because of their limited resources, and as it was necessary, in order to keep the roof over their heads, that each must work, it mattered little where they lived, since it was chiefly for sleeping protection that a home was needed. Hawaka, the son, made no attempt to support the two women, wasting his time at gaming resorts, and he had no scruples against appropriating whatever money they made, when the mood seized him.

There was one other member of the small household, who served them in meekness and docility, because of the old samurai grandfather whom her own parent had

faithfully served. Tradition plays an important part in the customs of the lower classes, and once a lord, always one. Chu Chu received no recompense for her duties; in fact, she did not expect it, for at her age one was thankful for a home. She was no longer young, no longer slender, and therefore no longer agreeable. Inversely, she had possessed all of those requisites at one time, in the heyday of youth, but time is no respecter of person; and age, which robbed her of her good looks, deprived her as well of her good nature. It was habit chiefly which kept her loyal.

The spacious grounds of the Moroshito silk industry edged in the direction of the terraced slopes of the rice fields. There were two reasons for this: chiefly, because when the precious silk worms are ready to cast off the liquid which makes the fiber silk, noises of any kind, or a shock, will cause them to stop, and therefore serious losses will result. The noises of the city could not penetrate this far. Though blind, these insects have acute hearing, and employees must go in stocking feet at this time, lest even the creaking of the clogs affects them. The other consideration was because of the dense growth of mulberry trees in the neighborhood, for it represented the food, which faithful attendants must assiduously carry to the *bombyx mori*, the silk worm.

Here it was that Cherry Blossom worked, every day, and the scant pittance that she received in *sen* represented ten cents.

Among the old women and girls employed, none was so conscientious as the Yuri-mother's girl. Patience and repression are the natural heritage of the race, for women, and although the very sight of the ugly little

writhing worms filled her with aversion, no one suspected it, and her fingers were as deft and careful as if she were performing a labor of love. The pathetic existence of these industrious tiny workers, their tragedy of life, in a dim way touched her sensitive heart. Every change, each passing evolution of the worms, called the univoltine, producing only one new generation each year, she knew thoroughly. She had been taught to select the larger ones for breeding purposes, for it consequently enlarged the cocoon. Domestication had robbed the silk worm, or moth, of its natural characteristics, for though having wings, so long had man carried its food to it that it had lost the trick of flying. And having no need to use its eyesight for discovering its own sustenance, vision, too, left it. Careful protection from the light, in dim rooms, had succeeded in achieving a species that was white or cream color, having no similarity to the wild brown genus from which it descended.

Cherry Blossom was conversant with every detail of their brief span. The worm had its four significant periods, as the seasons. The tiny eggs, yellow at first, suggested turnip seed, and it required many thousand to make an ounce. The Honorable Moroshito, who often unceremoniously inspected the rooms, almost as if hoping to surprise his workers in some gross negligence, so unannounced were his visits, paid greatest attention to the turnip seed eggs, studying them carefully to see if they grew blue-grey, for that meant that he might reasonably expect greater profits, for the eggs were then fertile. In June, when the iris fêtes began, the eggs would be hatched, perhaps by artificial means; often,

some of the workers carried them wrapped in the folds of their garments, near the body, where the temperature of the flesh kept them at even heat. This was not so bad in itself, at the first stages; but when tiny wriggling little worms began to creep out, in the larvae or caterpillar stage, one was not so patient, in spite of the philosophy taught by the great Yeken Kaibara, in the *Onna Daigaku*, or Book of Greater Learning for Women—impressing one with the wisdom of always acknowledging her own unworthiness and faults; and to eradicate the foolishness that is born in women. But even the great gods knew that women were afraid of worms.

However, to nervously cry out loud would attract a harsh rebuke from her superior, Miss Sunrise, and she might forfeit this opportunity of labor.

Fate chooses singular weapons of attack; there is nothing accidental in her location or campaign. Sometimes she uses a golf stick, a riding crop, or the bow and arrow; it is all the same in the end.

Even as the human offspring, the baby caterpillars are entirely helpless, and must be fed; one must have a steady wrist for this operation, in holding out the mulberry leaves on shallow trays, so they can attach themselves greedily underneath, where they noisily suck the juice. In a few days they would be ready to shed their first skins, and there would be three other moultings to follow. Cherry Blossom took much care to see that the fuzzy, repulsive objects did not tumble off in their avariciousness. But it happened that just at this moment of her concentration the Honorable Moroshito appeared directly beside her like a silent apparition, and

with a feebly repressed cry of alarm, her wrist trembled and one of the worms fell off.

A sharp, stinging slap in her face punished her for her carelessness; the hot tears sprang to her eyes so that everything was blurred, but she tried to remember the teachings of Yeken Kaibara, and repeated over and over her own unworthiness. The lordly head of the house passed on, eager to unearth delinquencies in other employees, admonishing her harshly as to future transgressions. The tears splashed uncontrolled on the shallow trays, as she faced this calamity; she was shamed. Off in the other end of the dim room a group of girls tittered over her plight, and drew aloof, whispering words of criticism.

"O-Sakurado," a voice said softly behind her.

Cherry Blossom turned her head cautiously, fearing a new form of punishment. Shiko, the son of the august Moroshito, who sometimes accompanied his parent on an inspection, stood beside her, his little glittering eyes turned in admiration on her. He put his hand lightly on her arm, beyond the tray of the worms. "I hope my honorable father has not hurt Cherry Blossom? My honorable father loves the worms very much. I, Shiko, do not. To me, they are always these horrible, repulsive things—I never think more of them."

Cherry Blossom forgot her flushed, stinging cheek, where the august hand had fallen. She looked up, steadily regarding Shiko, not caring for his friendship, but glad that the group across should see his overtures. She shared his antipathy to worms; he was not at all impressed by the thousands of dollars in profits they meant. They produced the great wealth that secured

for Papa Moroshito, Mama Moroshito and for him, their dissipated son, the enviable position they occupied, and which was augmented by the boasted ancestry of the elder as being of samurai birth.

"They make the beautiful silk." She defended them, mechanically. He laughed lightly.

"Some one must always work," he disposed of their industry with indifference, eager to have her continue talking to him. More than once, stalking obediently behind his father on their daily rounds, he had noticed the bronze head among the polished raven blackness of the other girls, and had paused to watch her graceful movements until a stern command from his parent reminded him of caution. But the habit of loitering grew upon him, and instead of being bored at the suggestion of accompanying his parent through the working rooms, Shiko delighted him by creating opportunities for doing so. The honorable Moroshito was indeed pleased; the gods had been propitious in bestowing on him a male descendant, a son to perpetuate the great name and continue the greater Imperial Ancestor worship, as tradition demands. He controlled one of the most profitable industries in the vicinity, and with both father and son co-operating in it, worldly ambitions of achieving millions filled his head. Blinded by his own delusions, he encouraged Shiko in his newly-created interest in the business, and allowed himself greater indulgences of self-aggrandizement among his fellow-men, acquiring a more elaborate kuruma, or rickshaw, with which to indicate his increased wealth.

Unconscious of the growing passion she was arousing, Cherry Blossom performed her manifold tasks, day by

day, giving the worms all of her attention, for she did not intend to merit any more penalties, as if she realized that the ugly fuzzy insect was of much greater value than she. Peeping under the trays, she knew exactly what change was affecting them, for, nature-wise, they stopped eating as it grew time to shed their skins, rising expectantly on their hind legs, and remaining in this cramped attitude for two days.

The room was wide, dimly lighted by two screened shojis; it contained probably thousands of worms, old enough now to masticate the leaves instead of sucking the juice; and the noise they made was like that of falling rain as they hungrily fed, exhausted from the effort of emerging from the final skin.

She did not encourage Shiko's presence, for she must exercise the greatest care at this period, as they were in readiness to spin the liquid silk, or fiber, the last stage but one before they reached maturity—and death.

Then, too, new trays must be prepared for the oncoming growth of worms, every day fresh leaves be picked, anticipating their needs; and the trays of the advanced worms required diligent watching, so that the industrious tiny workers would not be prevented by any interruption in consummating their object. It was all a profound lesson in activity and patience.

Shutting her eyes to their repulsive appearance, Cherry Blossom tried to find interest in the plan of their limited lives, provided by a higher power. In stocking feet, she tended them in the darkened room, while they cast off the fiber, which, hardening in the air, later became the shining, glistening silks worn by the aristo-

cratic women in the upper walks of life—paths which she never dared aspire to tread.

Never a noise disturbed them, she saw to that; but the angry thunder gods were not so considerate, and often sent terrifying sounds, shaking the walls of the buildings, and thereby causing heavy losses to the firm. There was no way to prevent this, but there was always a hint of blame attached to her because of it—and only the wisdom of Yeken Kaibara, as he emphasized to women their many faults, gave her strength to continue. But Shiko's passion could not be regulated by the cautions necessary to the progress of the worms, any more than it could be governed according to the book of the Greater Learning for Women; and it burned and flamed until his puny strength could no longer withhold it; and it burst into conflagration before her the very day that the vast army of worms began on their cocoons, deposited in neat rows on the bushy tufts on the trays.

Cherry Blossom dared not listen to his ardent advances; if she failed in her duties, she would lose the very necessary ten cents a day which contributed to the family's support. The worms demanded her incessant attention, as slowly each enclosed itself in its white tent or cocoon, until the secretions were exhausted.

This was the most important crisis of its evolution, and more than once the Honorable Moroshito had scolded her for not being vigilant in the care of her charges at this period, while the caterpillar changed to a chrysalis, for its sleep of nearly a month. Afterwards, free of the cocoon by its own efforts, it remains quiet until its wings dry. Then it proceeds to its final mating, which lasts several hours. And she must be very careful to collect

the different deposits of eggs, laid a few hours apart, for they represent a vast number of yen to the exacting head of the industry.

Trembling with fear lest the imperious Moroshito should arrive to witness Shiko's impassioned declaration, Cherry Blossom repulsed his advances, only increasing the intensity of his emotion. The echo of a footstep, silent, stealthy, succeeded in what she had been unable to accomplish. Already, completing the cycle of their industrious existence, after their mating and laying eggs, the moths were dying. To her, it was the allegory of all life, and a cloud of sadness rested on her face as she carefully picked out the dead insects, watching, like Atrophis, for others.

"O-Sakurado—Cherry Blossom." Shiko forgot his caution again, as the step passed by. He clutched at the folds of her kimono, kissing it over and over. She was fairer than any geisha he had ever had. Jerked back by the grasp on her garments, Cherry Blossom tripped, falling heavily against a tray of fresh worms emerging from their second skin. Almost as if by magic the angry countenance of the Honorable Moroshito was upon them, his arm raised to strike her, while a wave of coarse laughter came from the girls, busy around the room.

Shiko, his little eyes blazing with fury, jumped quickly to his feet, agilely interposing his body between his irate father and the girl. His thin, angular face was white with suppressed rage. He put one arm protectingly around Cherry Blossom, who cowered behind him.

"You strike Shiko when you strike her," he said, panting for breath. "No hand, even that of my honorable father, can strike the woman Shiko loves."

His words, more than his actions, disarmed his august parent, who, in a fury of mingled surprise and indignation, took a step back, his hand falling as if paralyzed at his side. He stared at Shiko, unbelieving the words, unable to fathom this unexpected revelation.

"She is discharged," he said, in menace, clenching his fist.

"Quite so," said Shiko calmly. "It is not fitting that the wife of Shiko should work in his parent's business. Tomorrow, I say, we make our plans for the wedding. I don't care about the old worms. I can go to America. You are too old to get another son. La, la."

He moved away, his arm supporting Cherry Blossom, who hid her face in shame; yet, withal, a tiny rebellious feeling against the wisdom of humility and self-effacement struggled within her, and she felt an indestructible feminine rejoicing over the whispering circle of workers, as they saw the evidence of her lordly lover. For the last time they had derided her cheap little kimonos and worn-out getas. After the grand wedding, she would ride to the works in a richly embellished kuruma, drawn by a big brown satsuma, and rustle her silk kimono over the floor on a round of inspection with Shiko.

The Honorable Moroshito stared after his son, his mouth open in amazement, his senses bewildered. He must propitiate the gods with expensive offerings, for it was what he had always feared. The lure of the foreign country, where money was so easily made, had

more than once tempted Shiko, but he had persuaded him to remain by means of permitting various extravagances; and nature had made it impossible for him to have further offspring. Tears of helplessness welled up in his eyes, that he should be treated with such disrespect by a son, he of samurai birth. It was the most bitter moment of his well-regulated life as his own child defied him. Pleadings, importunities, threats—he had resorted to all of them before, when Shiko's will had clashed with his, defying traditions and the basic principles of his religion. They would be futile now, as before. The gods who punished filial defiance would interfere; he would first appease them by acts of worship and offerings—and wait till they acted. In this his faith was supreme.

Miss Sunrise stared after the son as he departed with Cherry Blossom, who clung helplessly to his arm, still dazed by the unexpected protection and his declarations. She nodded her glistening coal-black head in dire prophecy to her audience of envious girls, whose ridicule of their poorer companion was subdued by her good fortune. To be loved by the son of the great Moroshito, dissipated though he was known to be, assumed an entirely different aspect, which relegated her to a plane already higher than theirs. Marriage would make her an aristocrat.

"She'll be his geisha before she's ever his wife," the Honorable Sunrise predicted. "Come, sisters, to work. We all can't marry Lord Moroshito's son. We must keep him rich so she will be happy." She added a note of malice to her jest, and jerked the innocent little worms with mild ferocity in their trays, vexed with

Shiko that he had not noticed the abundant mass of hair she possessed, and made love to her instead.

Shiko had no intention of allowing the gods to interfere with his plans. He was a product of New Japan, doubting traditions and defying parental laws. He had a slight familiarity with English mannerisms, and often affected a monocle, which sat upon him ludicrously. The beauty of the little silk worm worker was different from anything he had ever seen, and her pink and white prettiness contrasted markedly with the saffron-yellow skin of the girls he knew. When she raised her pansy-blue eyes and looked at him, passion tingled within him and he trembled to think that he possessed her.

Cherry Blossom accepted him without question, somewhat flattered that the son of the lordly house should seek her out for his favor; beyond that, it was not necessary to pretend love and happiness, for she had never known either, and therefore could not be unhappy from lacking them. Marriage was the greatest career of the girls of her land and she shared the ambition, though dreading the consequential life thereafter under her august mother-in-law's mandates. She did not fear that her future husband would hand her the "Three-lines-and-a-half," the old *Mi-Kudari-han*, that aggressively polite written intimation which tells the wife to return to the home of her parents if she failed to please his mother. Youth made her sanguine in her expectations. She overlooked the possibility of the worldly aspirations the *Moroshitos* entertained for their only offspring. Practically, Cherry Blossom belonged to the lower classes, and for that reason had received a much more liberal education than that accorded the daughters

of those of higher standing. In the *terakoya*, the public schools, where she had received her learning, she had been taught arithmetic, and the doctrine of the *Onna Kaigaku* was read to them daily; she enjoyed more personal liberties than the girls of the aristocratic families, who were impressed with the fact that they could never hope to be the mental equals of their husbands, and in whom every vestige of individuality and independence was destroyed. Neither could they expect to be able to advise him, or even amuse him. Thus the husband could find his pleasures elsewhere with *geisha*, openly and without criticism, as they were trained from early infancy to provide entertainment.

To be the prospective daughter-in-law of a proud family had also disadvantages. It was not permitted her to continue working, nor could Yuri arrange to apply herself to the daily tasks she pursued, in a clay potter's yard, where she painted vivid colors on the surfaces before they were fired. She had little skill, but for that matter she received little money; but a few cents a day could be stretched very far under her frugal guidance. And it was an honorable calling. But customs are inexorable, and although the half-blind old potter implored her not to leave him just as the tourists were beginning to arrive, she had no alternative, and he warned her then that Buddha would shrivel her soul if she left him without any other assistant; and she need never come back.

The humble little family was suddenly raised to prominence in the neighborhood by this connection. People who had ignored them came fawning for favor. Tradesmen begged for their patronage, and even

Hawaka grew arrogant over it and ran up innumerable debts in honor of it.

The Honorable Moroshito made no visible protest against the advance of the wedding plans, relying on celestial assistance to prevent it. He even permitted the customary observances to be made, consenting agreeably to making the necessary calls, loaded with opulent gifts as required by tradition and custom, which should make the engagement legally binding.

Servants in impressive livery had even delivered expensive cards announcing the day of their visit to the little hut, and one could never complain that he had failed in a meticulous attention to his obligations.

Across the gravel yard lived Timi, who had been educated in America and had brought back strange, rebellious ideas which made old women shake their heads disapprovingly and darkly hint at the malediction of the gods. Timi's father, who had been both parents to her for many years, was just as much condemned because of his stiff white collars and European clothes, and the breezy newspaper he published carried many warnings to his lethargic fellow men for not following the progress of civilization.

Timi's education had broadened her horizon of life and caused her to throw into the discard the superstitions of her race, man-made and man-worshipped in order to govern the credulous.

Timi had bobbed hair, and the freedom she had learned was indicated as well by her masculine trousers and golf stockings, as in her frank, modern views.

Vanity and commonsense were agreeably combined in her, for she still enjoyed the dubious pleasure of drawing forth a smart little vanity case, and "making up," lining her lips a shade redder as the mood urged, or powdering the tip of her nose. Not that Timi really cared for these artificial props of beauty, but she liked the indulgences of vanity.

Very modern indeed, was the little bamboo house where she dwelt, with its day beds, chairs and tables. Gone was the ancestral Butsudan, the miniature Buddhist shrine. In its place a very brilliant red plush album occupied the place of honor, and contained pictures of departed relatives instead of meaningless names, with a summary of departed virtues. And the pagan offerings of rice and tea, and branches of the flowering Shikimi tree were not seen.

It was West replacing East. The bobbed hair, the trousers, the vanity case all shouted her advance.

Timi liked her tiny, symmetrical garden with its prim rows of lilies—human flowers, living their tragedies and romances. The "young lady" lilies, the sweet-scented hime yuri, gave the enclosure an arrogant beauty because of their waxen charm. There was the wheel-lily, the golden-eyed Diospyros kaki, basking royally in the glaring white solitudes of the sun, like marble monuments for pigmies. Spikes of frost-white candle plants, the mitsumate, the paper plant, opened their petals drowsily in the noon heat, and the poet's favorite, the kaido, called the "beautiful noble flowers," fragile as his imagery, sought shelter in tufts of bright green grass.

These were the flower visits to the earth.

Timi dug viciously around their roots, like a mother engrossed in the nurture of her children, her knees in the dirt; today, there had been many little insects on the stems, robbing her treasures of their vitality, and she was abstractedly engaged in their destruction.

"Ohayo." A voice, femininely soft, called out. Her slaughter could not be interrupted by any friendly intercourse. She pretended not to hear while she added to the massacre, and finished it in triumph.

"Ohayo."

Timi arose in feigned surprise. Flower Garden, a type of old Japan in her getas or clogs, her looped hair and kimono, stood at the roadside, regarding her manish attire in maidenly modesty, with averted eyes, as if humiliated.

"Come in," said Timi politely. "We will have tea."

"No, Timi. I must hurry back. My *danna san* comes at any hour now. My lord would be very angry if his rice and fish are not ready. It is such pleasure to work hard for him. See, Timi, the beautiful pin he gave me even yesterday. Such a good master. Not once has he struck me yet."

Timi regarded her, with small tolerance of her opinions, her hands boyishly in her pockets.

"Rot!" she said, expressively. "Why should he strike you, Flower Garden? It is you who should strike him. You give him all; he gives you nothing. What does he do for you, I'd like to know, that you should work hard to please him."

"He is very good to me," the little kimono-clad figure nodded sagely its black, glistening hair with the many loops. "And always I have two helpings of rice, I must

say he is very honorable, my *danna san*. But I must hurry, Timi. Yesterday comes his friend, Honorable Mr. Foreigner, from America. He says, he wants no wife, but what does a man know what is good for him? I say nothing more, but I come to tell Cherry Blossom what a fine lord he would be for her, and all those wonderful bears on the cans he will get for her, I am sure. Poor Cherry Blossom, though, never has had a lord before, so perhaps she will not know how to please him." Flower Garden looked around, at the sound of a step behind her. The little cottage of Yuri-mother leant hospitably over the edge of Timi's garden as if to inhale some of the pervasive fragrance of the lilies. Cherry Blossom was stepping off the little box-shaped porch, her getas resounding against the wooden floor.

"Ohayo," said Flower Garden with a courtesy, and Cherry Blossom responded, in similar fashion, gravely saluting.

"My honorable lord, he has a friend, Honorable Mr. Foreigner, who came just yesterday from way off," Flower Garden launched eagerly into the errand that had brought her here. "I say, I get you a nice wife, like myself. My *danna san*, he very good to me. Perhaps Honorable Mr. Foreigner be very good to a nice wife, too. He make you a nice master, Cherry Blossom. True it is that you may not know how to please him, for you have not had the good fortune as I did to have two other lords before. But one can learn. I am sure he would give you much to eat and many presents.

"Don't listen to her, Cherry Blossom," Timi put in, vehemently, striding up and down the little gravel yard. "It isn't right. They don't do those things in America.

Nobody can be a hired wife. A wife means something better, some one a man seeks out to be the mother of his children, some one who is his equal. When a man has a wife there it means that his laws and churches allowed him to marry her, and it is put down in a book so he must cherish and love her always. The wife is never hired there. I guess she is more the master than he is, but he likes it. You women over here don't know what you are doing. You are degrading yourselves. Our men regard you only as toys, that are to be thrown away when they are tired. They never marry their hired wives. Doesn't that show that they don't respect you? Don't listen to her, Cherry Blossom. Flower Garden belongs to the old slavery of Japan. If she prefers to work hard to please a man instead of making him work hard to please her, it's her own bed she is making. Such talk is rot. They don't talk that way in America. A wife means only one thing. And if the law and the church do not allow it, it's all wrong, that's all."

She was so agitated by her indignation that she drew out her vanity case, to the evident fascination of her audience, and renewed the red line of her lips. That completed with much studied movement, copied from her prototypes far off, she paraded her silver cigarette case, lit the wisp of paper, and puffed masculinely at it, aware of the consternation her actions created, for Japanese women smoked chiefly at their dainty tiny kiseru.

"I do not need any Ingiris *danna san*," announced Cherry Blossom with pride. "Today, my engaged father-in-law and my engaged mother-in-law come, to

make their call. Any moment will they arrive in their kuruma. Soon will I be the bride of their rich son, and have a big brown coolie pull my kuruma. You shall see."

"But he would make such a good lord, such handsome eyes," Flower Garden continued, persuading her. "And I'm sure he would never beat you—perhaps not very hard. For, of course, you have not had the experience I have had, and you could not expect a man to treat you as mine does me." There was much repressed complacency in her mien as she spoke.

But her listener was not impressed by the graphic picture. Deep within her, the idea and its implied serfdom, its menial obedience, repulsed her. She did not entirely understand her intolerance of it.

"You women of Japan will never be treated like the women of civilized countries until you throw off this hideous slavery you yourselves are responsible for," cried Timi, vigorously puffing at her cigarette. "These are customs, made by men, enforced by men, for their own benefit. Your gods didn't make them, neither did your laws. Every law of decency and right is against it, and if it isn't right in any other country, then it isn't right here. It's rot, I say."

"Why, Timi—how wicked you are," commented Flower Garden, disapproval on her face. "How can you talk so against any of the beautiful customs our Imperial Ancestors made for our good? It will bring the punishment of the gods severely upon you."

"I'm not afraid of their anger," Timi snapped her fingers in derision. "Mere bits of stone and painted

wood. What can they do? I'm more afraid of my own conscience. That's the severest judge of all."

But Flower Garden had fled, putting her huge sleeves over her ears to shut out such inflammable speech. She only hoped that the wrath of the exalted ones would be delayed until she was safely out of the way. Timi was doomed; of that much she was certain.

Cherry Blossom held back, strangely interested in her friend's fiery words.

"Is it all true, what you say, Timi? And if it is true, how can we help it? Who is to blame? I am sure I have read the *Onna Daigaku* very often, and I am sure I obey always, knowing how inferior I am, and how very unworthy."

"But you are not, that's just it," cried Timi, shaking her head. "You've always been taught that the *Book of Greater Learning for Women* is true, that you are inferior and unworthy, until you believe it. But what if I tell you it is false, every word of it, and that you are superior to every man you know, and worthy of the best in the world; what then, Cherry Blossom? That's the truth. Can't you see it? Why, it's as plain as the nose on your face."

Cherry Blossom stared at her vaguely, not quite comprehending. The *Onna Daigaku* was one of the props of her daily life; it required a herculean strength to remove its support from her all at once. She turned toward her little home, seeing Yuri-mother frantically waving her hands from the *shoji*. It would not be proper to be detected looking out when the honorable

guests should arrive. Custom, inexorable in its exactions, demanded that the visit be paid by the prospective bridegroom's worthy parents, each bearing a costly gift.

So did all engaged maidens profit by the honorable call, with perhaps a beautiful kimono, or its sash, the obi—or jeweled pins for the loops of hair. Cherry Blossom not only would be very grateful to receive such presents, but in addition she needed them very badly, although Yuri, with an eye to economy, would much have preferred a pair of getas or clogs and some new stockings for her daily wear.

The goddess, Kamnosube-no-kama, who watches over lovers, had endowed the little silkworm worker with the priceless charm of beauty and grace of body, to atone for her lack of worldly acquisitions. Her kimono was very old and faded, for there was no money to spend on expensive clothing. But she towered above its inferiority, in her indescribable personality.

She ran to the house, realizing that she must remain within, or be severely criticized for her lack of manners, and she had no sooner gained the room than Chu Chu's growl of annoyance proclaimed that far up the strip of yellow road showed the outriders of the noble callers, commanding envy and attention from their less fortunate fellow-men whose poverty-stricken huts lined the road.

The little bronze gong rang discordantly, and in the most proper alignment, as demanded by the Book of Proprieties, the Family Moroshito entered with depressing pomp and ceremony.

The heavy silk jacket of the domineering father stood out around him, as if to forbid any hospitable shaking of hands. The blasé son, his face emaciated from dissipation, a monocle held rigidly in one eye, followed him, and last, indicating her position in the Japanese household, the small, withered, prematurely old specimen of humanity, the mother, walked, in mincing, uncomfortable pigeon steps, submerged under a heavy, golden brocade, the tip of her thin lips painted scarlet, evidencing her knowledge of what was required in the social code when making visits, and that she had read the *Shorei Hikké*.

Every one of the geisha, and, indeed, the *tanaka yujo*, the ladies of the Yoshiwara, knew Shiko. He was one of the most eligible young scions of the town, and a reputation for possessing numerous favorites, on whom he lavished many yen, had interested women universally in him. His little, glittering eyes rested greedily on the girl's pink-and-white prettiness, as very politely Yuri advanced in dignity to greet her honorable guests, then came Cherry Blossom in abject humility, which was eminently proper in the presence of her august father-in-law.

Cherry Blossom's cheeks grew red with excitement as she gazed on the beautiful gifts they bestowed on her; she had never possessed anything beyond the most inexpensive, cheap baubles that other working girls could acquire. The costly kimono of spring-like green, silken and finely embroidered in the blossoms of her own name, held her entranced. The pins for the hair that Papa Moroshito gave her, and Shiko's little necklace of ivory—was anything ever so beautiful?

"I must show Timi," she cried, oblivious to the exactions of propriety, and the condemning hauteur of her engaged parents-in-law over her rude behavior in their august presence. Timi would appreciate them, Timi would praise them. Good fortune had whirled to her head, recklessly upsetting her better judgment and sanity. She darted out, calling in her fresh, young voice, over the tiny bamboo fence that separated the two huts.

A frigid silence descended on the occupants of the little room. Shiko fingered his monocle in nervousness, recognizing the approach of a pitiless judgment. Love and fear battled within him.

Papa Moroshito was beginning to be agitated over the delinquency of the gods in preventing the union of his aristocratic son with the silkworm worker in his employ. He had been offered a very expensive sable coat and several thousand yen if he would allow Shiko to marry Morning Dew, the daughter of a thread merchant who aspired to lordly connections with a descendant of a real samurai. True it was that she had no claim to beauty, but what is prettiness but an ephemeral trick of coloring; and 2,000 yen can buy any amount of happiness from the gods, so they would never be without the honorable rice in their old age. The imperious Moroshito regarded Cherry Blossom's beautiful face as so much evil, employed to ensnare masculine humanity. Surely the Great Buddha would direct the way of release at the proper time.

In great mortification, he arose very stiffly, commanding thereby the same from the other members of his deferential family, thus passing judgment on the girl's thoughtless actions in rushing from their noble presence.

Poor Yuri, practised by years of experience and suffering, perceived at once that things were going wrong, and to remedy matters as best she could, she hit the floor many times very hard in obeisance, with her head, producing a nasty headache without accomplishing any of the mitigating effect she had intended on the offended callers.

The haughty Moroshito, as he took leave, turned his head condescendingly toward his hostess. There was a malicious light in his narrow eyes. Yuri looked meekly down, impressed by his magnificence as much as by his autocratic bearing.

"There is the study of the *furtyu*, the Elegant Manners, which she must learn," he said, coldly, as he stepped outside. It was as if he had said: "We are the proud Moroshitos. To come up to our level, you must know how to defer to our demands."

Yuri bowed her coal-black, lacquered head again to the floor.

Near the bamboo fence, Timi stood, sharing the pleasure of Cherry Blossom in her newly-acquired treasures. The irate glance of the insulted Moroshitos fell on her neatly-trouserred limbs, in their smart knickerbockers, and with their aristocratic noses tilted above such vulgar happenings, they motioned their servants to open the bamboo gate, and hastened to their three richly gilded *kurumas*. Each carried a sunshade, except that Papa Moroshito's was the most expensive, a huge purple circle, lined with fringes of green and gold, and bore an insignie of ancient lineage on its ivory handle.

Shiko had lingered behind, awaiting his parents preceding him in their vehicles. He whispered to the girl

what he had not dared say in their presence, in furtive haste.

On the morrow was the Cherry Blossom festival, the Matsuri, when people flock to the parks, to send trembling prayers for happiness from the temples.

"Does Shiko go to the park?" Cherry Blossom asked him, falteringly, hoping that they might be seen in public together, and she would have an opportunity to wear the beautiful new kimono.

Shiko yawned, one eye on the over-dressed, shapeless form of his august mother who was being helped into her kuruma, opening her sunshade, of a dull, ugly blue, so that it would not impair the gorgeous effect of her lord and master's.

He yawned, plainly bored. Such direct questions were unbecoming an engaged girl. Not even a wife was allowed these intimate confidences.

"Sayonara," he whispered lightly, ignoring her inquiry, indifferent to the growing disappointment in her eyes. "Next time, then once again—and it will be our wedding day, in the month of the Bird."

CHAPTER IV

IN UYENO PARK, where huge double-pink cherry blossoms made flaunting banners of color against the rich dark green pine trees, Hawaka, with Yuri and Cherry Blossom, walked along the winding paths, watching throngs of people sipping cups of honorable tea and saké. Long, fluttering pieces of paper, on which poems and prayers for happiness were written, depended like strange insects from the boughs, tossed by the wind into odd, grotesque shapes.

The Japanese have a saying: "Among men the samurai; among flowers the sakura." Religious superstition places supreme faith in the ceremonial of written prayers, hung so that the gods of the Matsuri might read—and reward. Cherry Blossom timidly tied one on a low branch, asking for happiness, too; it was a mere form.

Yuri, clad like other widows whose romance is long past, was unobtrusive in a dark kimono, her hair freshly lacquered. More than once Hawaka turned and regarded Cherry Blossom's natural loveliness with deep scrutiny, and small wonder it was; for many heads looked back at the picturesque figure in its delicate, spring-like green attire, scattered with a tracery of cherry blossoms, and Chu Chu had twisted sprays of her namesake flower above the rich bronze puffs of hair over each ear.

The paths were crowded in the early dusk; priests, taking respite from arduous duties, moved with the crowds, passing undetected. Favorites of the Yoshiwara were walking, as much to attract patronage as for exercise, bebies of tiny girls attending them, carrying their wraps; the gay young bloods of the city dodged behind, in the diffusion of light from the pink lanterns on the flower-laden trees. But even in that subdued radiance men, impertinent, bold, jostled familiarly against them, pushing Cherry rudely by the arm, sweeping Yuri off her feet; and their discomfort became so great that Hawaka took less congested paths back to the Ginza, and as the hour of the Dragon clanged at the temple gate, eight o'clock, they paused at one of the gaily-lighted stalls to partake of some inexpensive refreshment, as the long walk had made them tired. Cries, hoarse, supplicating, from the different hawkers, noised around them; the mournful, staccato notes of a Chinese flute player sounded dirge-like, forcing their attention to his basket of buckwheat cakes, suspended on a long pole over his shoulders. It was no worse than the wailing cry of the Amma-Hari, the blind shampooer—who beats and pummels his patrons in performing his task.

Rickshaw men, huge, bronze, half-naked men from the hills, darted like weird beings through the streets, with miraculous speed, the muscles of their limbs standing out in purple ridges; often, in gay carousal, several students had piled into one rickshaw, but the hill-men paid little attention to their burdens.

Before them, the hanaya, the picturesque flower-seller, with his boxes of living, growing plants suspended from

bamboo poles across his broad blue back, strolled, a cigarette between his lips, intoning in spite of it his monotonous, mechanical words: "Hasu-no-hana—Flowers to sell. Flowers to sell."

Cherry grasped Hawaka's arm with enthusiasm; she wanted a spray of the Matsuri flower. The sakura would bring her happiness, for it was her namesake. Hawaka motioned the vendor to him, arrogantly tossing out a sen. The hanaya gravely selected a branch, presenting it to Cherry Blossom. He demanded another sen, but Hawaka shook his head stubbornly.

"Takai! Takai!" he said sharply. "Takusan," which meant that it was quite too much; in fact, two sen would provide him with many pleasures, and to waste it on a spray of flowers was annoying to him.

The flower vendor suddenly caught sight of Cherry Blossom's radiant face; in his dense intelligence she could be no other than the Sakura Goddess herself, who, tradition had it, often took the form of a beautiful maiden at the Matsuri, to discover the shortcomings of her worshippers. And with a startled exclamation, he fled from the scene, muttering his neglected prayers for protection.

Cherry Blossom buried her face in delight in the fragrant mass; it was well she did so. Not far in advance of them stood Shiko, a geisha behind him, as is not unusual at night, and if he saw Cherry Blossom she would be disgraced; for an engaged girl should never attend the ennichî or Matsuri at night without her honorable parents-in-law and lover. And this inexcusable breach of an observance would be sufficient to

completely break off all relations with the lordly family. Yuri had seen him, too, and quick as a flash shoved Cherry Blossom into an open shop, and she and Hawaka kept on in the crowd in the shadows, to escape detection. Shiko had passed. Emboldened by his disappearance, Cherry thrust her head timidly out, and looked up and down the street; but her relief was brief. Attracted by a clamor behind him, her honorable lover was retracing his way, and she jumped swiftly back into the shop; in the dim light she stumbled over jars and curious objects arranged over the floor. Images, big, menacing in the dark, confronted her on all sides. Huge paintings, in massive frames, were supported against the walls, and ravishing odors of sandalwood and strange incenses made a thick smoke in the rear. Her clogs hit smartly against one of the jars, and it overturned; at the noise a little old man, withered and brown, his long teeth gleaming even in that semi-light, glided noiselessly from out an alcove, where he had evidently been enjoying his pipe while resting from the cares of the day. It was quite possible that he had also been at his devotions, at his shrine of Imperial Ancestors, and was emphasizing his piety with an abundance of incense. He seized a lantern and held it up high, seeking the explanation of the noise. At sight of Cherry Blossom's face, his lantern fell to the floor as he cast a look of amazement at her, and, paper that it was, dissolved into a flame—and nothingness—at his feet. He rubbed his hand drowsily across his eyes, as if unbelieving.

"It is the Hishigawa," he muttered, frightened, to himself. "Buddha is great." Tomorrow there would be seven lantern prayers to save his soul.

Little Cherry Blossom was too scared to notice what he did, afraid of his displeasure at her intrusion; her greatest fear was that Shiko might see her, and the thought of her shame overwhelmed her. She caught frantically at the hand of the old shopkeeper, begging him to conceal her, making him understand that she was being pursued by evil ones intent on harming her.

In the noisy, boisterous crowds he could well believe it. At the substantial sound of her voice, faltering, pleading, he was visibly relieved, and became again the commercially shrewd individual that nature—and the Occident—had made him. His sharp, restive gaze swept over the walls. All of his pictures represented the Great Master's art, he who had passed into Nirvana over two hundred years ago, but no one had ever possessed his secret, to paint such beautiful women, so real that they stepped out of the frame.

He stared reflectively at the girl's exquisite beauty; she was prettier than any Hishigawa he possessed, and as if by divine intent, she resembled closely his most famous copy, the Cherry Blossom, which depicted a beautiful maiden with her hair wreathed with the mystic flowers.

A chattering, gay party of Americans was entering the shop, attracted by its dim light and the gleam of ivories; at the same time, Shiko, faithfully shadowed by his servile geisha, who lurked in the shadows outside, but whose bright little eyes never once lost sight of him, secure in her prey—entered with his arrogant manner, rudely pushing aside any who stood in his way.

The brain of the Oriental travels rapidly. Osaka, the shopkeeper, realized there was an opportunity for profit

and gain, and always seeking the cause, he attributed his good fortune to his gods. In instant recognition he noticed the party from the Embassy, and Deering, who had been proof to his persuasions before. He hesitated no longer. He hastily drew Cherry Blossom up a flight of narrow crooked steps to a platform, where some bronze frames were artistically grouped. It was all done in a second, the girl arranged on a cushion, a delicate grey gossamer veil thrown over her—such as he kept for shrouding his newly painted pictures to temper the high lights—and one of the ornate heavy frames was placed, so that the painting was complete. The effect was marvelous; it stood out against the inanimate canvases surrounding it with luminous power and depth. Then Osaka, versed in his trade, hung a dull, weird jade green lantern so that it cast a peculiar shade over the face in the frame, and smiling, and imperturbable, crept noiselessly down the stairs, advancing graciously to greet his patrons, rubbing his withered brown hands. Cherry Blossom sat as if she were in reality a bit of canvas and pigment, for she had an uncomfortable sense of danger, and perhaps Shiko's sharp eyes would discover the deception; her heart beat nervously, her hands felt strangely numb and cold, as she suffered under her apprehension.

“Honorable Mr. Foreigner buy?” Osaka asked adroitly, with his most suave smile. “Tonight, it is the Matsuri. I have the wonderful Hishigawa, the Sakura Maiden, Cherry Blossom. No picture ever so good. Great Hishigawa been gone many many long years—200 by the count of the flowers. This picture

look as young as Honorable Mr. Foreigner and his pretty American ladies. Come, you see it?"

There was much light banter among them; it was a gay crowd in itself, for they had been to the Imperial garden party, earlier in the day, and the precision and formality had to a certain degree limited their enjoyment. But the beautiful gardens, the gracious salutations of the Empress, the innumerable courtesies extended to them more than sufficed to atone for the strict court etiquette they had to observe. Dinner at the Embassy offered opportunity for relaxation, and still in their evening clothes, the women with light scarfs thrown over their shimmering gowns, they joined in the pleasure seekers, enjoying the strange ceremonials at the temples in honor of the Sakura goddess, and finding their way through the streets, in delight at the colorful kaleidoscopic aspect.

Deering was the object of their banter, but he stood it good-naturedly, as he had done all afternoon, although he confessed he had committed some atrocious blunders. Twice had he stepped on the Imperial foot of Her Majesty, as he tried to bow backward on leaving the levee; and more than twice had he taken his saké from the wrong side of the cup when it was presented to him by a very gorgeous being with a sword. And he had not the advantage of excusing his stupidity by invoking Buddha.

The Major, more red-faced than usual because of his discomfort in his Tuxedo—and the prescribed stiff collar—leaned heavily against the bamboo wall, fanning himself, despite the coolness of the night air, with his hat. Grace and Cousin Em preceded the other women

in the party, pausing to admire first one object of art, then another, as the shop keeper hung up more lanterns to display his wares. Just as with the Ikebana, the science of the arrangement of flowers, there is as much wisdom in the hanging of lanterns, for ivories should never be displayed unless in the warm flush of orange or pink; nor should copper be exhibited unless the light sheds an effulgence of red; marble demands its blue, to whiten it, and the intricately carved objects of teakwood and sandalwood seem to belong to jade—that weird, religious, baneful light, half real, perhaps wicked—as the flash of a seductive green eye is evil—conveying both good and bad, just as evil spirits may lurk in the temple.

Deering idly followed where the shopkeeper directed. There was a rustle of silk, an odor of expensive Arabian oils and perfumes, and Shiko stepped insolently in front of them, waving his hands, on which his long elaborately polished finger nails shone like the talons of a vulture.

“I buy the Hishigawa,” he declared importantly, raising his head to show his hauteur. “Honorable Mr. Foreigner not have any right to take our best paintings away. Show me the picture, Osaka, an’ petty dam’ quick—that what American gentlemans say.”

The old dealer shook his head, dubiously. Shiko already owed him many yen, for presents he had sent to his geishas and his favorites in the Yoshiwara. It was all right to speak grandly of the big marriage ceremony in the month of the Bird, in the fall, and of the chests of money the Samurai father would give as a present; but that did not help him at all, for he had many

painters to pay for weekly tasks, and there were the frame makers, too. So he hesitated.

"Let me see the picture again," said Deering, with indecision as to purchasing it. He was not yet awakened to challenge by Shiko's offensiveness.

"I only see the picture first," Shiko interposed, imperiously, clapping one hand angrily against the other; it was partly for the benefit of the geisha, so that she would be impressed by his importance and dignity. Shiko was a true *Joi-or*, or hater of the foreigner. Already their thrift and keen knowledge of conditions took out of his native land every month many thousand yen, and he had the suspicion of the ignorant that it meant a depletion of his country's wealth, not realizing in his stupidity that it increased native prosperity by keeping the proverbial doors of trade and commerce open. His attitude now partook of this conviction, and his narrow eyes emitted sparks of real antagonism, though his physical senses took infinite delight in the appearance of the women in their low-cut gowns and bare arms and shoulders. In Japan no decent girl exhibited herself thus in public, and it was one of the many reprehensible acts added to the long list of innocent deeds not permitted her. Morality is a philosophy and not a practice here; and as the body is the City of the Nine Gates, it matters little how one treats it, but the mind must be kept pure.

The jade green lantern gave to Cherry Blossom's face the appearance that the cunning Oriental knew it would, and nature appeared to be the mystery of the brush, so correct, so accurate, that it looked artificial.

"Why, it looks real!" Cousin Em cried excitedly. "Is it a painting?"

Osaka rubbed his hands again in enjoyment of his ruse. "It is the great Hishigawa," he said solemnly. "That is the way he paints. How much Honorable Mr. Foreigner give?"

"The picture is mine," Shiko interrupted, in anger, waving his hands menacingly. "Here are one hundred sen." He threw the coin insolently on the floor, where it clattered and rolled among the stone and bronze jars. "Tomorrow you send it to my house—you hear, Osaka? And dam' quick, I say."

"I'll give thirty yen," Deering jumped into the fray with relish, his eyes determined. There was an indescribable charm about the old canvas that appealed to him, but he disposed of it as being the skill of a hand that knew its art.

"Forty yen." Shiko shot a vindictive glance at him for pushing the price so high. "Send it tomorrow—you hear?" He stamped his clogs in rage, not accustomed to having his wish opposed.

"Fifty yen." Deering's usually calm voice rang out like a clarion. He had made up his mind suddenly. There was a charm about the picture that made him want it. After all, a place could be added for it in his toy house, and he was impelled by a curious, inexplicable desire to own it. It was not so much the childlike, innocent face of the girl it represented, but it suggested growing womanhood, the wistfulness of youth, and an elusive hint of sadness. Perhaps he had invested it with these allurements, he told himself, being eager to discover them in it.

And, again, it was a fitting expression of the great artist's skill. Its intrinsic value was unmistakable. The glowing, pink brilliancy of the cheeks, softly rounded; the droop of the eyes, shadowed by their thick lashes, the unusual mass of brown hair—one could only wonder where Hishigawa Kichibei found his subject, so different from the oblong almond-eyed faces of the beauties of the land, and their lacquered coiffures.

"The picture is mine." Shiko folded his arms across his breast and faced them with sullen determination. "Nobody else can have it. I demand my right."

"Where money?" Osaka asked quickly, his face full of cunning. It was trickery against itself. He did not intend to accept a bad bargain; and he refused to wait till the marriage occurred, in the month of the Bird. "I tired of you always say Mr. Honorable Father pay. Your Honorable Father never pay—Osaka has long, long bill, and he needs money. Honorable Mr. Foreigner gives me money now. This is Matsuri. There are my Imperial Ancestors to be fed and prayers for Buddha. I want my money right now, and as Shiko says, dam' quick; you hear, Shiko? You hear?"

Osaka was plainly angry. Months of patient waiting for sums long past due had resulted in arousing a deep, powerful, savage anger; he was old; no geisha looked at him any more, because he could not afford perfumes and oils and presents. Shiko represented more than a debtor to him, something that robbed him of the privileges of life and romance. It is hard for wisdom to confess the preference for youth.

Shiko, raging with fury, shot his hand toward him, but Osaka parried the blow, and his long front teeth resembled those of a vicious animal.

"You be sorry, Osaka," Shiko threatened, moving majestically toward the opening, not looking back. "You be sorry." He disappeared among the people on the street, and the soft step of the geisha followed him in silence.

Deering, having acquired the masterpiece, stood below it, gazing raptly at the canvas. It was indeed more beautiful than he had thought. The Major slapped him familiarly on the back, approving of his purchase. "I never saw anything like it," he was enthusiastically repeating to first one then the other as the rest of the throng stepped forward to see it. "I'd almost swear she was living."

"Did not the bird, the chaffinch, step out of the canvas, leaving a hole where he painted it?" Osaka breathed mysteriously as he pocketed the money. "It is the great Hishigawa. Once, there was a lady he painted, so beautiful that a great samurai fell in love with her, and his love burned so that it made her come to life, burning in her heart, too; and she stepped out of the frame, and they enjoyed seven hundred years of happiness in Paradise."

They laughed, tolerantly, at his faith, as Deering gave the address where he wished it sent the next day. Osaka followed them to the door, with many injunctions: the picture was very old; if the honorable foreigners noticed, he never let the penetrating, destroying light of the sun, or even daylight, fall on his priceless treasures; for the paint was 200 years old, and who could say if

tomorrow it would not disappear? There was no fear, if one kept it away from the bright light; there could be a balcony made for it, high up, with a lantern in front of it. Such was the way he was taught.

"Well," said the Major as they stepped out, "he is either a very remarkable old man, steeped in knowledge, or a wonderful liar."

"How can you say such a thing?" Cousin Em interposed, reprovably. "What do we know about their marvelous art, their lore, their deep superstitions? And it is true what he says about lanterns. I know at home we always used pink candles on our dining table so our complexions would look more youthful. See, Major, there's the flower man, with his plants actually in dirt and growing on his shoulder boxes."

"Hasu-no-hana! Hasu-no-hana!" The vendor perceived their interest, and shouted louder.

"Do let's be foolish," Cousin Em cried. "This is the Matsuri. We'll all have some cherry blossom. Jack need not be so lofty because of his being the only one to own them." The Major allowed her to make him purchase an extravagant amount of them, which she painstakingly divided.

"You see where Hishigawa got his inspiration," he said, learnedly, making the mistake of sniffing at the odorous flowers. Age can seldom afford to be romantic; the Major had always been an annual target for that bane of middle age, hay fever, and it required only a fleck of pollen to send him into a vigorous sneeze.

Deering replied absently; the opulence of the stalls, the ever swaying red and green lanterns, the incenses from the temples, affected him languorously, like the

spell of witchcraft. He felt as if he were merely a shadow in the dim, always moving, restless procession, as it surged and throbbed in the sweet, fragrant, flower-laden air.

Cherry Blossom arose slowly from her cramped posture, shook out her crumpled green kimono, and made her way carefully down the crooked stairs. It must be very late; the temple bells could not be heard so far within, because of the unusual noises of the streets. Soon it would be unsafe for an unprotected girl to be out alone, and she would deserve whatever calamity should befall her.

The old shop keeper patted her on the arm, in kindness; she had been the means of his making a good sale and deserved recompense and he thrust a handful of sen into her palm.

"Someday we sell another Hishigawa," he said, friendly over the luck she had brought him. But Cherry Blossom had already darted away, catching sight of Hawaka's tall figure across the Ginza, and Yuri's little form beside him. They were apparently searching for her, alarmed at her continued disappearance, and she ran over to them, regardless of the swiftly running coolies and the hawkers, and threw herself into Yuri's arms. It was very childish, but tears of joy coursed down their cheeks, and while they petted each other as if suddenly reunited after a lapse of years, Hawaka took advantage of the opportunity to enjoy some boiled fish; for he only had two sen left and that would only pay for one.

CHAPTER V

THERE was a tiny pool in the miniature garden, its limited expanse edged by trim rows of cockle shells and tiny, creeping vines. Cherry Blossom was afforded infinite delight at the reflection it gave of her, like the vain bird that parades in its pompous beauty. Surely never had any one before possessed such an embroidered kimono, woven with its flowery blossoms, in the soft, vernal tints of nature, the pink for happiness, and the green for contentment. Even the sparkle of the gifts her engaged father-in-law, the great Moroshito, had bestowed on her, with chary courtesy, assumed minor interest in comparison.

Being essentially feminine, Cherry Blossom chose the garden for this exhibition of her newly-acquired treasures, the like of which she had never possessed before, for she wanted Timi to see them, Timi who lived in the small bandbox of bamboo adjoining. For she had been raised in that far-off country where her father had engaged in business, and the results, which had accompanied her back to the land of her nativity, such as fitted dresses, even worse, masculine appearing knickerbockers, shoes with heels, and hats, were very grotesque, indeed. And were it not for the stern precepts one learned in the Shorei Hikké, that punctilious Book

of Proprieties, one would have had to laugh very loud at sight of them.

But vanity was abruptly dissipated at the sound of a voice over the fence of bamboo sticks—the frail boundary which kept the great world out. Startled, Cherry Blossom's quick gaze fell on the rickshaw at the gate, the two men stepping out, and her heart fluttered in timidity. They were not of her race.

They stared at her glittering ensemble, compelled to vague admiration, as she put her hand in embarrassment to her head as if to cover the jeweled pins thrust through her brown hair. Modest Japanese maidens do not thus attract attention in public, and she colored red, knowing that she had committed a flagrant sin, and must atone for it by two extra lantern prayers that very night.

Yuri, running out in trepidation, saved her from speech, her black, lacquered head bristling aggressively, as she resented the intrusion. Bamboo fences, unstable though they were, meant protection, for did they not bring immunity from the sickness, and pests of fleas? Somewhere between those two calamities, in her mind, were included the Honorable Foreigners, and she listened with small grace as one of the intruders stated his errand.

The priest, at the temple nearby where they sent their prayers to their gods, had directed him to Yuri's cottage, for did she not know more than the great newspaper printed every day on the Ginza, and if one wanted to ask how many children the proud samurai Nikoto had, he who killed one thousand dragons many hundred years ago—or how many butterflies were in the Hyakka-yen,

the Garden of 100 Flowers, there was none else could tell. And he remembered, also, that she had cared for the passing wayfarers in a House of Sorrow, an abode for the sick and dying, before she appeared in the tiny hut at the edge of the mulberry fields. Only Yuri would know.

Perhaps madame could assist them in finding some trace of the wife of their client, a beautiful woman from a far-off country, who, with her husband, an army officer, many years ago had been touring the country. She was his bride, they had loved each other dearly; but there had been a foolish light quarrel between them—words that meant nothing in themselves—but the heart of the little bride had been hurt, and sensitive in her childish pride, she had incredibly disappeared. Many years had a search been made for some trace of her, years in which her grief-stricken husband had become a middle-aged man, but time had not healed his suffering any more than it had restored her, his little lost bride, to him.

There was every reason to believe there had been a child, and the father would not relinquish his quest until actual proof had been discovered to confirm his forebodings, that his bride had died. If the child did not exist, all of the vast wealth, the property which the wife possessed, would revert to a distant branch of the family. For many years, in different parts of the land, following even the most tenuous clue, they had been indefatigably pursuing every suggestion as to her possible whereabouts. But all had been futile. No one else would know, but madame, the priest had declared. Perhaps she could recall some incident which might

enlighten them, a tangible basis that might afford a solution of the mystery.

Yuri looked measuringly at her visitors, her hands folded wing-like across her bosom.

"Will worthy guests condescend to take cushions?" A gentle clapping of her hands evoked Chu Chu from the house, her arms full of brightly colored zabutons. Chu Chu, always scenting disaster, and seldom being disappointed, cast suspicious, angry looks at them. She dimly associated all trouble with honorable foreigners, no matter from what part of the globe they came.

Yuri suddenly closed her eyes, a rapt, trance-like expression overspreading her little brown face. She struck her forehead thrice with one small clenched fist, as if to dislodge slumbering, lingering memories.

"The honorable priest spoke truth," she commented, solemnly, in her monotonous voice. It was strangely impressive, as she seemed to intone the words. "He is right. No one but Yuri could know, for no one but Yuri has the senses and the understanding of her youth left. Many years ago, it was when I had the Sick House, the House of Sorrow. Many came, many went. There is nothing different from the other to remember. Men, women, little children cast off by their cruel parents—what mattered who it was, for then could I give them bed free, and care, for my own lord was with me then, and I had money, many yen, to provide for them. But when my honorable master was taken away by the Great Buddha, when the big Sorrow crushed me also, what had I left? I kept them while I could—many years longer; but there was nothing any more to buy the food. Many women, good, bad, came to me. The

House of Sorrow turned no one away. It did not ask the names; all were sufferers, punished by the gods. Some tarried longer; some took the long journey to Nirvana, begging to stay here. Men, women, young girls. Sometimes they left behind something for memory, a trinket, a letter, seldom a name—packages of clothes, perhaps. The House of Sorrow; the honorable priest was right. Into the world they came, in pain; out of it so they went. The men left what the world gave them, the women what the gods gave them. Babies—many babies; but some sickened without their mothers, and the Great Buddha carried them over to their lonely mothers. Some were taken up to the hills, where the priests cared for them, until they were old enough to work in the rice ridges. I asked for no money. Then sorrow seized me, too. There was nobody to care for poor Yuri; and the House of Sorrow disappeared. The honorable priest spoke truth.” Her cadences fell peculiarly on her listeners’ ears. Her simple speech had portrayed graphically the brief, ephemeral tragedies and dramas enacted during her years of sacrifices.

“Is there no one in particular, a beautiful white woman, sick, sad, who came to you? Surely some white women passed this way. There must be some recollection that stands out from all others?” One of the callers asked eagerly. “No one but you can help us, madame; of that I feel assured. Do you remember any one else, fair, perhaps ill?”

Yuri pondered deeply.

“There were so many, white ladies, girls of my own land,” she said, in meditation still, as if arraying those ghostly personages of the past before her vision. “So

many, each in sorrow, coming and going, trying to forget, afraid to remember; women, running off with love, and finding out in horror that love had run off from them. Is it not so, Honorable Mr. Foreigners? Your men, when they love unwisely in your great country, where your law is higher than the law of nature, sometimes they run off here, with their love—and what then? Love is dangerous. It cannot feed on itself alone, like the plants. They cannot live alone. The bees, insects, must make them thrive. So it is with love. It cannot live alone. Otherwise, it dies—or it runs off. Many white, strange women have come and gone. Yuri did not know them. One was laughing, one was crying——

“I knew when women suffered—when the heart was breaking. So have I won contentment from the gods. Ask Chu Chu. She can say. So did they all bless me, some with dying prayers that the gods heard. I remember one white woman, very sick and very sad—there was a baby, too.”

“Was it a girl?” The man cast a sharp, secret scrutiny over the flawless fair face of the girl beside her, whose radiant eyes were distended in awe over Yuri’s plaintive narrative.

“No,” said Yuri, emphatically, “it was a gentleman baby, Honorable Mr. Foreigner. But what matter now? Both are gone. It was the will of the Great Buddha.”

“Have you anything—perhaps letters, or a dress, or a picture?” The taller man of the visitors had arisen, and was excitedly speaking. Yuri listened in patience, hardly able to follow him in his vehemence. A second

clapping of her hands succeeded in bringing Chu Chu's shapeless form into view, and she gave her a lengthy direction that her callers did not understand.

The servant returned after a few minutes, carrying a large lacquered black box, depositing it with gravity before her mistress.

Yuri took a huge key from out an inner fold of her sleeve, and unlocked it, beckoning her guests nearer. Many packages, yellowed by passing years, reposed on top—bits of old ribbons, withered lotus flowers, little remnants of romance and life, empty reminders of love and sorrow. A musty odor of long forgotten years lay heavy upon them. Yuri's brown hand dug to the depths of the box, as if trained by familiarity, and drew forth a small bundle, tied with black ribbon and a white paper prayer for happiness. She broke the bands loose, and threw the contents on the ground before them.

"White lady's clothes are still here," she resumed, in her uninflected tone. "They were too big for Yuri; and who knows? Perhaps I would have been putting on my back the garment of sorrow. It is as well they did not fit. The little hat, it is so funny. And see, there are some very nice letters. She, this one, if I remember, was very, very sick. Body sickness and soul sickness and heart sickness. The gods cannot cure all three at once." But her audience was not listening. The men had seized the faintly written letters, and were deeply immersed in the contents. They said a few words to each other, idly scanning the faded, queer dresses on the ground. It was an unexpected but not improbable ending to their long, continued quest. Death had won,

not their client. Only the ashes of an old romance remained—an echo of a great love, startling, sad, disappearing, out of the past.

“If I may present these letters to my client,” the older man was saying, with a dignified bow, “I will amply reward you. My name is White. Perhaps he may wish to talk with you. It will be a great blow to him.” He held out some bills toward her.

A line of severity set around Yuri’s mouth. She thrust the money rudely away, her eyes flashing in hostility.

“I sell them?” She laughed shrilly. “I, Yuri, who would have plucked out my heart to have saved her?” She threw one arm around Cherry Blossom, who was ridiculing the short-waisted dresses, and their odd, peculiar tiny ruffles. How it would make Timi, Timi, the wise one, laugh to see her in those musty old things. She grabbed the little round hat, wreathed so pathetically with its blue line of forget-me-nots, and tied it on her head. Yuri jumped swiftly toward her, tearing it off her, an ominous frown on her usually meek little face.

“It is the garments of sorrow the white lady wore,” she cried, inarticulate with horror. “Nobody must wear them ever. Poor white lady who died—and the poor little white baby who died, too.”

Her agility and vehemence arrested the attention of her callers.

The hand of one fell heavily on Cherry Blossom’s arm.

“This girl is not the little white baby, is she? Come, now, tell the truth.”

Yuri shook her glistening, lacquered head in firmness.

"She my white baby," she dropped her burning eyes in meekness, her arms again in the folded, wing-like attitude of submissiveness to the gods. "Yuri, too, had a white lord, Honorable Mr. Foreigner. "Yuri had suffered, too. But love did not run away from me. My American lord went away to the Great Buddha, and this one he left me."

"Well, it's a great disappointment." The visitors threw off the gloomy atmosphere that had held them all as they pried into the box with its secrets of the past. "We were led to believe that our search might be successful, and that the child, at least, might be found."

"If Honorable Foreigners did find white lady's baby, what would they do with it?" Yuri asked, politely.

"I suppose the father, who is a very aristocratic gentleman, would want to take it away with him, and make up for the years that have been lost. Well, I thank you, madame, for this most convincing information. And I am sure he will wish to thank you very materially for your kindness to her." Yuri shook her head in dissent.

"I cannot tell which one it was," she said sadly. "There were many of them, coming, going, laughing, crying, love and sorrow. That is life. The Great Buddha sent her to me, of that I am sure, for I have the great content now." Her eyes followed their departure, a sombre, colorless figure beside the brilliant attire of the girl beside her.

She tottered to the house with short, pigeon steps, a bit of Old Japan, clinging restlessly to its old customs and old beliefs. Cherry Blossom followed her, first

watching Chu Chu as she gathered up the dresses and placed them back in the box, and locked them very carefully, as if in fear the precious, perishing keepsakes, with their dying memories, might escape.

Yuri's arm swept Cherry Blossom to her bosom as she removed her clogs at the shoji, and entered. She regarded her wistfully between her embraces, her small frame convulsed with grief.

"O-Sakurado, Sakurado," she wept, repeating the name over and over with little moaning cries. "O-Sakurado."

The girl patted her wet cheeks, frightened at her unwonted agitation, murmuring tender, broken words of endearment, bits of childhood days, to calm her, as she nestled confidingly against her.

Yuri raised her head, making visible efforts to compose herself. She pushed the girl from her, studying the effect of her confession on her.

"Sakurado," she said solemnly, "Yuri has told the honorable foreigners a bad lie. The Great Buddha will punish her for it. To you, she cannot lie any more. You must know the truth. Sakurado, the little white baby did not die at all. It lived. You, my Sakurado, are the little white baby. Yuri loved you so, she could not give you up. Perhaps Buddha not strike so hard now. Poor Yuri. She is not your real mother."

"Not my real mother? O, Yuri, Yuri, not my mother?" Cherry Blossom wildly cried, throwing herself in an abandon of sorrow on the floor, struggling with her anguish over the confession. "O, I wish Buddha would kill poor Sakurado. Her heart is breaking, too, Yuri. Still, my Lily-mother, Yuri, why did

you tell me at all? Why? Why? It was wrong to tell me. It can do no good now, after all these years. You will always be my mother, Yuri." She sobbed unrestrainedly, then they clung to each other, bitterly weeping afresh as the truth was gradually realized; there was comfort in each other's arms.

Chu Chu, convinced of some unusual calamity—for did not the honorable foreigners always bring it?—gravely measured out and brought to them two cups of the honorable tea, checking their emotion to some extent. According to the great Sho-rei Hikké, grief betrayed was worse than any exhibition of immorality, for the City of the Nine Gates, the body, must be considered merely as the house of the soul; it is the mind that makes things wicked. This inherent repression has developed a peculiar stoicism, an apparent superficiality of feeling, and soon both women had seemingly banished their troubles, refreshed by the beverage.

"Perhaps my American father take me away," Cherry Blossom said, abruptly, her mind revolving on the strange circumstances engulfing her. "Perhaps the Honorable Foreigners come back right away, Yuri? They make poor weeping Yuri speak the truth at last, Americans very cruel. Timi says they never put prayers to hang on the trees; they have no gods. How, then, can they be good?" She rose to her feet, her cheeks flushed with a new rebellion.

"I—Japanese girl," she struck her breast proudly. "I never leave Japan. What need money for? I have what I want. Nobody can make me go. I marry Shiko and be great Japanese lady. Today I go to Shiko's Honorable Family and arrange it. We marry at once.

Yes, Yuri-mother? And Shiko have a little house made for Yuri, too, I am sure."

"Nice Japanese girls do not go to see honorable lover's family," Yuri corrected her politely. "I go, too. It is the wish of Buddha. Perhaps Samurai Moroshito want marriage at once."

Their spirits revived under such happy contemplations, and in the excited preparations for the visit, the poignancy of their fears was lost. Chu Chu called in Slender Bamboo to arrange their coiffures, promising pay at the time of the grand marriage, for they did not intend to leave any cause for criticism that would make Mama Moroshito complain of their ignorance again of the Elegant Manners.

Yuri's black, glistening hair was drawn over a pad, in a shining roll, for this was the distinction of being a married woman; and then it was delicately brushed with the paste so that it made a glossy frame for her thin, wrinkled, brown face. It was different with Cherry Blossom, for a heavy application of camellia oil was made to her lustrous bronze locks, and she submitted with patience to a very tedious construction of hair on top of her head in order to properly show off the glittering pins presented to her by her future father-in-law.

Yuri could not afford a rickshaw; it was not very elegant to walk along the dusty road, picking one's way gingerly over stones, with silk stockings on. But then, everybody knew she was going to have a rich son-in-law, and perhaps by the end of the week, if the wedding took place at once, she would be whirling along like an aristocrat, in a decorated kuruma, drawn by a coolie,

with a new purple silk sunshade. It is wealth indeed to have a "daughter" to barter.

They had first to stop at the silk-worm plant, for here it was that the energetic samurai as a rule was to be found; and they must not temporize. By a fortunate coincidence, Mama Moroshito was also there, for it was a day of important events with the proud Moroshito family, and all of their friends were assembled in the industrial plant; for the worms were finishing their cocoons, the older growth, and vanity impelled the noble head of the firm to invite his envious acquaintances to witness the completion of the product that would mean several millions of yen in riches.

Today his silk workers were busied, to the point of diligence, killing the moths by immersing them in boiling water and letting them remain until cooked. In this unique method, there was no necessity to sever the valuable silk fiber, accomplishing its ruin, as so often happens when the moths are allowed to emerge from the cocoons as nature intended, by their own fettered efforts.

Miss Sunrise was giving quick, curt, business-like commands to her band of assistants, engineering the slaughter; occasionally, when no one was looking, a worm, boiled, more succulent than others, found its way surreptitiously into her mouth. It was a luxury which otherwise her meager income did not permit.

The arrival of Yuri and Cherry Blossom precipitated their labors into confusion for a few minutes as the former acquaintances of the prospective bride of the great man's son gazed in awe and envy at the gorgeous raiment she had donned for the occasion.

In the main work room, where the moths were being boiled, stood Mama Moroshito, waiting stolidly in her heavy silk kimono for her honorable husband to return, after he had exhibited to his friends a new process for tinting the fiber by providing colored food for the worms, in the next room. She could hear their elaborate, meaningless phrases of politeness and their flattering deferences of action and word to him.

An avalanche of excitement descended on her tranquility, as Yuri made a profound obeisance before her, for being the mother of the prospective bridegroom had indisputable advantages over being merely the mother of the prospective bride. Mama Moroshito received this necessary homage in silence. She had not forgiven Cherry Blossom by any means for beguiling her honorable son into an engagement when she had no dowry. There would be punishment, even if she had to wait until the bride was brought to live with her.

In brief minutes one can often pass swiftly through a transition of emotion which many seldom undergo in a lifetime—grief, despair, surprise, humiliation, pride—the gamut of mental suffering. Cherry Blossom very properly approached the Honorable Moroshitos with her implorations, only to be rudely repulsed. The deceit of Yuri, in concealing the girl's nativity, included her in its guilt.

The noble samurai's descendant listened, concealing his inward rejoicing. The far-seeing Buddha had generously responded to his prayer, and he would be wearing the luxurious sable coat when the Great Heat had passed. One could endure much bodily discomfort when covered with priceless fur.

Cherry Blossom's suffering did not impress her haughty, invulnerable judges at all. Tears to them were merely so much waste water that the body must exude. Grief was as reprehensible as any other physical exposure. To exhibit any emotion was as improper as to disclose a portion of the body. To cry showed a deplorable lack of education. They were, in fact, exceedingly bored at this unnecessary, disagreeable, noisy occurrence.

Once, Shiko, warming to her tears and supplications, turned his closely-cropped dark head in her direction, but not for the second time. The proud Moroshito put one slippered foot between them as Shiko half turned toward her, persuaded by her lovely distress. It was a beautiful picture of grief she made, clad in the expensive kimono which only a few days ago his mother had bestowed on her for the customary engagement gift. Silk though it was, glittering with its threads of spun silver, it was but a poor frame for her beauty, and his weak, abused emotions pulsated wildly through him in uncontrolled fire at the sight of her, making his limbs tremble.

"It is the law of race," the icy tones of the great Moroshito fell as sharp bits of steel, cutting in their precision, inflexible. "Tomorrow, Shiko will be pledged to Morning Dew, who stands rightly beside him now, to protect him from such as you. Her honorable father is Japanese. So will their many children be. Race is race."

Cherry Blossom looked piteously around at her cruel judges, hurt, angry, shamed, her maidenly virtues dragged in the dust. But pride, slowly rising, like the

gradual encroachment of the flame that devours its way through all obstacle, leaped into sudden life. She stamped her little foot in indignation, tearing off the jeweled pins Papa Moroshito had brought her as his gift, and throwing them to the floor, ground them under her clogs so that their expensive shaping became a twisted mass, their beauty destroyed.

Yuri, a sombre cloud behind her all of this time, sprang into view, raising an avenging fist high in the air.

"Damn you," her gentle, monotonous voice sang out with wrath, as they swept out, a startling malediction from her insignificant, gentle presence. "I say, damn you," she called back over her shoulder as they departed.

At the other end of the room, Miss Sunrise had been intently listening, while she pretended an engrossment in the worms that was entirely unnecessary. The cocoons lost all interest compared with this new scandal; her narrow, beady eyes took on an amused expression. Her prophecy was coming true. She could forgive immorality in the girl but never her beauty. She savagely gave the innocent worms a shake of anger on their trays, getting the next growth in readiness for their little journey of industry.

"Sakurado," she half-whispered over the pots of boiling worms, from which she was taking the cocoons, at the other side of the case. She motioned her indolent workers around the room to assemble in order to relish the discomfiture of her rival.

"Sakurado." Her voice rose higher. Cherry Blossom, discreet in her actions, suspecting some ruse,

merely glanced in her direction. It was more of an affront in its studied indifference than a reply would have been. "I always said you would be his geisha first," sneered Miss Sunrise, failing to draw the girl to her side by any deception of friendliness. "I am sorry I cannot ask you to come back now. They will not want any like you here now. We have to be very particular, you know, because of the greatness of the proud Moroshito's name. He would not allow it, of that I am very sure, for you never worked well, anyway. If it had not been for his son——." But her words failed to reach them, for Cherry Blossom, followed solemnly by Yuri, had already disappeared into the dark, narrow entrance leading outdoors, while the happy Moroshitos were congratulating themselves upon the miraculous delivery of their beloved first-born, and were planning his immediate marriage to the thread-merchant's ugly daughter, Morning Dew.

Shiko, however, had mysteriously disappeared, veritably under the eyes of the girl who had stood beside him. Morning Dew did not especially like Shiko, but her proud parent did, and like all dutiful Japanese maidens, that was more important. There was some one else continually in her thoughts; once or twice she had seen him riding in the rickshaws from the big Embassy, a man of her own race, but of the newer generation, and he had regarded her with so much admiration that her virgin heart still fluttered coyly at the remembrance of it. There were other occasions, too, cherished in her innermost thoughts, silently, as precious jewels are recounted in the dark, when one is alone. She gave a sigh of resignation: Shiko would probably be as good a

husband as other men, and the gods would punish her if she disobeyed her honorable father. For that was woman—mother, wife, sister or daughter born, for obedience to their men, right or wrong.

His passions inflamed, forbidden to see her again, Shiko was unable to give Cherry Blossom up, and he stealthily followed the two women out, hiding in the shadows until they had once passed, and until he was beyond paternal vigilance. He hastily ran after the fluttering silk kimono, grabbing the folds to prevent the girl's advance.

"Cherry Blossom," he breathed softly behind her. She turned her proud little head in his direction. He took advantage of her indecision and stepped beside her, leaving Yuri in the background.

"You see, I must not speak against my honorable parents, who have brought me into this world," he excused himself lamely. "But Shiko thinks very much. He still loves his Sakurado. She is always the beautiful blossom to him. Even if the honorable parents do not allow me to marry her, I can still love her, and see her every day, perhaps. I will make her my first geisha girl, so she can always be with Shiko. This will I do."

A sharp, stinging blow from Yuri's hand fell swiftly on his cheek. It sent him stumbling to the ground. A noisy titter from the windows behind them indicated that Miss Sunrise and her sympathizers had witnessed the mortifying procedure. Shiko slowly rose to his feet, his narrow, gaunt face reddened with anger.

"You black dog," cried Yuri in ferocity, her eyes stormy. "May the Good Buddha shrivel the tongue in your head, to insult my white lady girl. You black dog."

Shiko rose slowly from the ground, his hand fingering his smarting cheek on which Yuri's blow, merciless in its power, despite her frail physique, had left a dull, discolored spot. It awoke into relentless activity all of the vicious forces of his weak nature. He hated Yuri and her gentle voice and her meek face; her alert faculties, always anticipating his well-deliberated machinations, thwarted him always with his own weapons.

His frenzied desire to possess Cherry Blossom had never been so acute, so dominant, as now, when she was taken from him by paternal mandates. Reckless as to consequences, with disregard for the rigid exactions of the proprieties, Shiko evolved a plan by which he would accomplish his desire.

There was only one way, and that was plainly through Hawaka. By tempting his avaricious greed, and a proper dosage of cajolery, perhaps he could persuade him to lend assistance; and between them there was no fear of reproaches, or accusations, for the standards of the one were as low as the morality of the other was lax.

That blow of Yuri's—he cursed her for it under his breath, following the forms of the two women down the road, with vengeance in his gaze. He would punish her for it. One struck where it hurt the most. She should suffer through the girl she loved and defended from him. He laughed sardonically, as he visualized his plans.

He leapt agilely over the dust road, and squatted on the sparse grass, looking down the bank, where below wound the lazy paths of the park, where the favorites of the Yoshiwara had begun their afternoon walk.

Canopies of silvered, faded green wistaria vines floated in tremulous curtains over their shapely lacquered heads; it was a colorful procession of flaming purple silk and the scarlet of their profession, as they tripped on tiny feet over the man-made, sandy lanes, followed by a modest retainer of little girls, who were being made proficient in all of the wiles of the geisha, perhaps to take their places at future periods.

Gay parasols, green, golden, and orange, shed variegated effulgence on the tea-colored faces, on which high lights of paint had been placed with skilful touch.

Shiko regarded them with casual interest. They caught sight of him, far above, in the greenery, and waved a friendly hand, inviting to conquest; but he made a characteristic gesture, with his right arm, showing disinclination, and the line of brilliant color passed on.

One, a thing of fire in her shining red kimono, hesitated, then joined step with the others. A bright yellow shawl marked the place she had stopped.

Shiko, intrigued in spite of his stoicism, sprang lightly down the ledge, almost falling on top of an aged flower seller, whose boxes of dirt, with their odorous plants of violets and paper lilies upset, much to his indignation and the merriment of the little children in the wake of the painted ladies.

"Moon-Glow," panted Shiko, breathless from his exercise, as he held out the silk shawl. He tossed the cursing flower seller a sen, adding a kick from his shining leather shoes, as an inducement to move on.

"Moon-Glow."

The woman in scarlet turned an indifferent face to him, walking on with her companions.

"Your wrap," said Shiko, with a profound bow, as he extended it. The little girls looked at him with wondering eyes, covering their faces with tiny paper fans in maidenly confusion.

The merry laughter at a whispered jest floated back to him, and the beauties scattered under the deep hanging boughs of blossoming trees, here and there their gorgeous raiment showing amid the green leafage as some wonderful bouquet.

Shiko looked ruefully at the silk in his hands, faintly perfumed with the languorous scent of sandalwood and rare, ravishing odors, feminine in its loveliness, full of sheen as the coquette herself. It was womanhood, symbolized—beautiful, luxurious, perishable, dropped in the dust, at his feet, to be scorned, or accepted, in light amusement.

Custom, which permitted the *tanaka yujo*, the ladies of the Yoshiwara, their idle liberties, was man-made, affording them protection—just as the dirt paths winding in and out of the fragrant park, planned by man's cunning, with their bird perches, their quaint glimpses of a Shinto Temple in the background of *cryptomeria* trees. Man's artifices supplied these landscapes with nature's own artistry, even to carefully arranging the picturesque mounds of rocks where piebald lizards basked in the trickling yellow sunlight that fretted the surface.

Between pink and white banks, in graceful majesty, lustrous white swans glided, occasionally between their snowy bodies the golden carp leaped and sparkled like

diamonds scattered by white hands through transparent, greenish sea water.

Woman—a thing inferior, by nature, by customs, by men. Shiko cast the gleaming yellow shawl, iridescent in its brilliancy, on the ground, crushing its satiny surface with his foot, to show his intolerance of the sex. Only one woman possessed any fascination for him, the power to attract him now, and his brows contracted in gloom as he made his way to the thoroughfare where swift-running rickshaws tossed up acrid, stifling clouds of dust.

CHAPTER VI

THEY walked rapidly in the heavy dust over the road down which they had so jubilantly come, dejected at the unexpected result of their visit, faced by the discouraging prospects of the future. The soft yellow earth discolored their white stockings. Deprived of the possibility of a rich son-in-law, Yuri became suddenly miserly. Even by practising the strictest economy, such luxuries could not last long, and repeated washing had left its effect already on them. It is hard to be poor, even when one is blessed by the gods with youth and beauty; but when one is old, and no longer possesses any charms, and is condemned to ugly, much-mended garments, it partakes of despair. Yuri dared not contemplate the grim realities beyond the present; she was afraid, for she did not know where to turn for aid. Deluded by the vain dreams of the betrothal, they had both forfeited the pittance that represented their daily existence, and with this gone, the situation was indeed critical.

Cherry Blossom, sanguine because of her youth, bounded ahead, her troubles only momentary.

"Hawaka will help," she turned her head so that Yuri, trudging bravely behind, could hear; she did not see the furtive wiping of her eyes, so that her tears would not be detected. "Hawaka always tells us what to do. He speaks the good advice, whether we take it or not."

Yuri did not reply; her shining, lacquered head, the elaborate preparation of which had been in vain, moved stiffly in denial.

"Hawaka never think at all," she finally broke out, in decisive tones. "Hawaka never think at all except about Hawaka."

The patter of their clogs made the only sound, save for the lonely cry of a starling seeking its nest in the bamboo forest adjoining the truck farms. Cherry Blossom paused midway in her walk, her radiant face all at once very grave; she regarded Yuri's little, insignificant form in its over-resplendent kimono in deep seriousness, her eyes clouded.

"If I am the white lady's little white baby, then Hawaka is not my brother." She spoke slowly, her cheeks flushed with excitement at her discovery. Yuri stopped, her hand over her heart, as if to steady herself; her breath quickened. She threw a piteous look at the girl, all unconscious of the torture she was suffering. She had always feared it, her discovery. It had come; she would have to answer it. She drew herself together with an effort, striving for calmness.

"Hawaka is—not your brother," she said in a hard, dry tone; it was not at all like her usual soothing, gentle voice.

"Then I marry Hawaka." Cherry Blossom danced gaily up and down, delighted at having found a solution to their predicament. "Already we great friends, and always he leaves me at least a little piece of pickled fish when he eats. I am so glad. . . . We can be very happy. . . ."

"No" Yuri's hand, small though it was, fell heavily on the gay green kimono. Her black eyes blazed like red-hot coals in her wrinkled sad face. "No. . . ." She put her hand over her eyes, shutting out unpleasant memories. "You never marry—Hawaka. . . ." She hesitated, striving for courage under the girl's clear gaze. She must tell the truth once for all; all these years she had lied, temporizing, hoping that it might not be necessary. Lately, more than once she had noticed Hawaka's lustful eyes feeding on the girl's charms, and it had sent a dull terror through her, making her fearful, apprehensive of their companionship. She choked convulsively, unable to continue. "Hawaka—bad, all through. You hear? He a geisha son. His father, nobody know—there were so many of them. . . ." She covered her face with her hands, in shame at her confession. Cherry Blossom took a step back, away from her, in silent horror; she was dazed, petrified—shocked more than words could explain.

She began to cry helplessly, her faith in the little brown woman destroyed. . . all of her little tender remembrances of her early childhood seemed blotted with this ugly knowledge. . . . She sobbed unrestrainedly, her whole being crushed under the revelation.

"What matters?" Yuri went on brokenly, in a flame of defense. "One must live. And when my American lord died, so good to me, so kind, there was no money. What little had been left must go for a tomb or his soul would never reach Nirvana and we would be shamed by the gods. Then it was I had to close the House of Sorrow. There was no money. Days did I go without bread. Days did I pray to Buddha for even a crust.

I could dance, I could sing, I could play the samisen. Men are so easily amused by other women when they already have a wife. Anything different pleases them; if their wife is good, then it is a wicked woman they want. If the wife is wicked, then it must be a good woman. It was not a disgrace to go into the Yoshiwara. By and by I made enough money to buy the little house; by and by I had enough saved up to leave, for Hawaka was coming; the Great God Jizo was sending him to me, so I would always remember, always be tortured, because I sold my soul—when I sold my body. So do the gods punish. There is no love for babies in the Yoshiwara. So, you see”—she gave a little pitiful gesture, in which resignation, shame and despair were combined. Cherry Blossom did not look around. She had heard every word, at first intolerant of its meaning; then apathetically, each word smarting the wound in her heart. It was the custom of her country. Yuri had not sinned. Many women accepted the life of the painted women of the Yoshiwara as a profession, losing nothing by such slavery. But deep within the girl's nature, something warred against this outrageous practice, condemning it and its victims who through ignorance and tradition supported it. It was a conflict of race, but she did not know it.

She walked steadfastly in advance, unable to rid herself of her gloomy thoughts; Yuri had hurt her, that feeling was uppermost in her mind. There might be other Japanese men who admired her; before long, who could tell, there might be another proposal. That very night she would make two prayers to the god of marriage, Gekkawo—one for a samurai husband, and one

for an honorable eel merchant; for, according to her country, Cherry Blossom was *kokoro yasui*, heart easy or love free; and it mattered very little to her whom she married so long as it prevented her from leaving the land she loved. Perhaps some day, when she was a very old woman with shaven eyebrows and blackened teeth, testifying that the springs of affection had ceased, she would go to that far away land where Timi said women were just as important as men, and even walked in front of them; but it was almost too dreadful to contemplate at present.

They had planned, with reckless anticipation, what luxuries would be theirs after the great marriage; tears of disappointment welled in her throat as she regarded her soiled silk stockings; it was her last pair, and it would be a long time before she could afford others.

But, with the elastic spirit of youth, as they approached the cottage, she almost forgot the day's unpleasant happenings—except about Hawaka. That she could never forget. She changed her attire, and took her *samisen* from the corner, for perhaps it might be as well to practise her music again and be in readiness for the new lover Buddha was to send.

But throughout all of her playing the despairing words of Yuri throbbed in her head, as if written in fire, torturing her. Yuri had hurt her; Yuri had lied to her, many, many years. She felt no pity for her because of her visible suffering in making the admission, for youth has an arrogance that condemns frailty.

She sang dismal songs, finding inexpressible joy in repeating the sad words:

“Hanaya, Yoku Kike,

Sho aru naraba,
Hito ga fusagu ni,
Naze hiraku?"

It was very pathetic, indeed; it had a sinister lachrymose effect on poor Yuri so that she wept furtively, between spasmodic little puffs at her pipe, the *kiseru*, which she filled frequently from a silken tobacco pouch at her side, with pinches of the dried weed, and lighting it, delicately inhaled the fumes between her tears. It was the essence of refinement, but one does not smoke long in Japan; there is caution expressed in the adage, "At the bottom of the pipe lies poison." So the brown little woman barely touched the stem of the brass pipe with her lips, knowing exactly when to stop; then the bead-embroidered pouch covered the tiny *kiseru* again and was hidden in the thick folds of her girdle or *obi*.

Cherry Blossom's voice was tremulous and ended in despairing wails, striving for an effect on the husbands the great god was to send.

"O flower, hear me well, if thou hast a soul,
When any one sorrows as I am sorrowing, why dost
thou bloom?"

She broke off suddenly; Yuri had hurt her; Yuri had lied to her. She felt as if every word she sang cut into her sensitive heart. It was the deceit, planned though it was to protect her, that hurt her the most. She could forgive Yuri's life at the Yoshiwara—that belonged to the customs of the country, and many women of good family went there, and returned without losing any of the esteem of their friends because of it. But the lie about Hawaka—that was intolerable, and the gods punished for that.

She looked stoically at Yuri's under-sized form across the room, shaking with her sobs. Despite her angry denunciation of her, somehow it sent a responsive vibration through her. She pushed her samisen aside, slowly rising, impelled by the affection that even deceit could not stifle. She would never trust Yuri again, of that she was confident. Her hand fell on the bent head, softly stroking it.

"Poor Yuri," she said faintly, half-crying herself.

Yuri raised her wet, swollen eyes to her, begging for clemency. All at once she seemed to have become the supPLICATOR, their positions reversed. They clung to each other without words, in strange understanding.

Cherry Blossom grabbed her samisen, and burst into that mirthful, irresistible bit of melody, as Yuri dried her tears:

"Come, let us dance the Dance of the Honorable Garden.

Chan, Chan,
Cha, Cha,
Yoitomosé,
Yoitomosé,
Chan, Chan, Chan.

Come, let us dance the Dance of the Honorable Garden."

Soon Hawaka returned and they had their honorable rice and an especial extravagance of sweet millet cakes, which Chu Chu had baked because she scented the oppressive atmosphere in the house, and when the stomach is full the mind is slow; and she believed in giving trouble no avenue by which to enter the body—that house of the soul.

Then it was that Yuri, with much hesitancy, advised Hawaka of the broken troth between the two families, but she was unprepared for the startling effect it had on him, for he jumped angrily to his feet, his face cruel and his narrow eyes blazing. The disruption between the proud and wealthy Moroshitos and Cherry Blossom was more than a shock to him. It had given him prestige among his companions and he had not hesitated to borrow money on the strength of his sister's union with the samurai's son. In fact, it had required many notes to prevent public exposure for his debts, and to have his dreams crumble thus unexpectedly made him tremble with a fury which he leveled at the two helpless women. There was nothing remaining out of the calamity, for he had even pledged the humble cottage in which they lived, for the son takes authority in all business transactions over the mother, and she is always at his dictation and command.

They cowered on the floor, on their zabuton, afraid of his anger; vile names he called them, invoking the wrath of the gods, and vengeance for the treachery they practised on him. And the two women sat in patience until the storm of his wrath should be spent, Yuri, grinding her finger nails into her flesh, resisting a fierce, unholy desire to fall on him with all of her puny woman's strength, and choke him—kill him.

She had never liked him, offspring of passion that he was. She hated him, hated his cruel, angular face, his evasive, crafty eyes, his deceit. Yet, one must live, and the money he brought in—only Buddha knew where he got it, for he never worked—it paid for the day, and kept rice on the shrine of the Imperial Ancestors. And

she was his mother; thus was the good Buddha punishing her. She hid her writhing face, groveling in her misery, powerless, as he abused her.

"If Cherry Blossom not marry Shiko, then must she work," Hawaka announced in a dictatorial manner. "Other Japanese girls bring in three yen a month. There is no reason why my sister be a lady and wear a silk kimono when she not work. She is young. She should bring good price every month."

Yuri raised her lacquered head, fear darting through her.

"Sakura is not strong; she cannot work hard," she said quickly.

"I get her work she can do," Hawaka shook his head, his eyes snapping. "I know where she get good pay."

The girl jumped excitedly to her feet, and threw her arms around his neck, laughing and crying in one breath.

"Good Hawaka. Good Hawaka. See, Mother Yuri, did I not say he would help? He is always good."

Yuri drew her away with a peculiar action; a dread of impending danger shot through her.

"Where is it?" she asked sharply. "She can not walk far, with her little feet."

"I know good place. Yesterday Yeddo, the honorable silk merchant, sent his two daughters there; he need the money for his big business, to buy more silk. The gods did not send him a son when he prayed; two girls eat much; they must work. Lots of fine girls go there, I know. What matters it? Money is money, no matter how it grows. It makes no difference whether you make it with the head or the hands or the body."

"No, no," Yuri wildly screamed, throwing up her

hands in protest. "Never there, Hawaka; never there!" She caught Cherry Blossom and drew her to her, holding her tight in her embrace as if to prevent him from carrying out his intentions. "Not the Yoshiwara. Not the Yoshiwara. Sakura is a good child—she is nothing more. The Yoshiwara makes them bad. Perhaps the body is only the City of the Nine Gates, and a dwelling place for the soul, but, if one lives in a bad house, one gets sick. One must keep the soul well as much as the body. I never let my little girl go there. Never. First would I kill her, so that she never suffer like that."

He shrugged his shoulders in contempt. Her arguments had no effect on him; it was even less than the whine of his dog, in anticipation of its bone. "The silk merchant, he has bigger tombs in his graveyard than you," Hawaka said sullenly. "With many Jizo-Sama, and a bell in the left hand. He is a great man; and he has more than seven coolies. He let his two daughters go to help get money to make him rich. What harm? By and by they old and nobody pay them money. One must live."

Yuri pressed her lips firmly together, checking her growing hostility toward him. She must not let him be aware of her intentions, and later on she would pretend sleep, to see what he would do.

It was not long after that she withdrew into the adjoining room, behind her screen, and placed her night lantern and her kiseru beside her wooden pillow; for often one smokes during the night, a few whiffs at the pipe making sleep more tranquil.

Her breathing, regular, sonorous as one who dreams, misled him; he stepped in, noiseless in his stockings,

to assure himself that she was not deceiving him, then tiptoed out just as lightly, and drew his cushion over to the end of the room where Cherry Blossom was industriously making lace on a tiny white satin cushion.

"Someday Sakura have nothing but silk kimonos to wear every day," he said, persuasively, his cunning, brilliant eyes sharply watching her. "Some day, she ride in her own rickshaw, with a big brown satsuma, big, big legs that run so fast, to pull it. That is money. I know a fine gentleman who loves you, Sakura. He say he like very much to meet you. Some day when Yuri goes out I will take you to see him. You big girl now. You are not a child."

Cherry's lips parted in delight.

"And would he marry me?" She clapped her hands joyfully. She would not have to leave Japan; she could live there always now.

Hawaka cautioned her not to awaken Yuri, who slept. One could be pleased just as much without making such a disagreeable noise.

"What is marriage?" he said, lightly. "Married women have to work so hard; their lords treat them very badly; they grow lots of ugly children who do not mind them at all, and they get old and sick. What is marriage?"

Cherry Blossom blushed delicately, like the first flush of the dawn on the wan petals of a flower. She had her dreams, influenced though they were by traditions and a proper fear of the gods. Her white fingers flew swiftly over the net on which she was appliquéing a rich pattern; it was to have been her wedding veil, when

the mysterious "Three-times-three" ceremony between the bride and groom takes place. She did not require it now; she would have to sell it, for they would need the money. She stifled a little sigh.

"Tonight, I bring the gentleman here to see what a nice girl you are," Hawaka whispered guardedly. "Perhaps he not like you at all. Who knows? The good Buddha makes so many more girls than men, and they are very cheap. Sakura will see what a fine gentleman her brother has picked out for her. Pretty soon I go out. By-and-by I come back and tap on the shoji. Yuri mother sleeps with her dreams and we will not awaken her. You and I will have great happiness with the gentleman. Perhaps he may want you to go with him at once, tonight."

Cherry Blossom nodded, in interest. She did not understand why it all should be so secret. It would be nice to have a chance to wear the veil and not have to part with it. She waved Hawaka a merry salute, watching him leave. It did not seem possible that he was as wicked as Yuri hinted; he was very kind to take all of this trouble about her.

Yuri had heard it all. Once satisfied that he had gone and was already far up the road, she hastily arose, dressed with care, and made Cherry Blossom acquainted with her fears.

She hastily packed some belongings of the girl in a large handkerchief, as is the custom, for there are few essentials of the wardrobe required, and they deliberated over what course of action to pursue. Hawaka might return at any time. Cherry Blossom must be safely out of the way before he came back. There was

nothing for Yuri to fear. He had seen that she was asleep when he talked with the girl, and she would not be suspected of abetting her in her flight.

But where could she go?

"Timi may know," suggested Cherry Blossom, so they rushed across the little yard that separated the two tiny huts, realizing the necessity of haste.

Timi, a masculinely attired figure in her neat tweed suit, came rushing out and embraced them warmly.

"I only wish I could help you, dear Cherry Blossom," she said. "But this I must warn you of. Do not let Flower Garden persuade you into being a hired wife."

"Never that," interrupted Yuri, quickly, raising her thin arm in defiance.

"Never that, Timi. You are right. Flower Garden means nothing wrong, but she does not know what is right."

"The women of Japan themselves are to blame that this curse is upon them," said Timi, in her clarion voice. "Look at me. My legs are straight, I am tall, strong, clear minded. Why? Because every day, in that far-off land over the ocean, did I walk, and run, and march with the Scouts until my legs grew and stretched out as nature intended. I had lessons in the schools with boys beside me. I learned what they did, I knew as much. Sometimes I knew more. Boys are often very stupid. I was allowed to think, to talk, to say what I felt. I sat on chairs, so my legs would keep straight and long. Look at the women around you here. As children, their little brothers and sisters are strapped on their backs, dwarfing their bodies, weakening their backs. They sit cramped on the floor, their legs having

no place to stretch, curved unnaturally under them. They have no exercise to keep their bodies healthy and young, they have no exercise to keep their minds active. Why? It is the fault of the men. Man-made customs; man-made rules. It is better for their needs to keep us so, to keep us back. I see a new Japan coming, a race of new women, leaders, untrammelled in their customs, taking their place side by side with men. Some day they will be proud to call us equals here. Instead, now we are slaves. Be careful, Cherry Blossom, where your steps lead you. I am sure Flower Garden is not doing anything wrong from her point of view. Then she is not sinning. But when you know it is wrong, and believe it is wrong, it is a terrible sin that you are committing. Good luck to you, Cherry Blossom. Some day you will see Timi was right. Some day a big disaster will strike here, and tear down old buildings and old customs. Out of the destruction will come beautiful new houses, new types of women and men, all working to help each other. There will be little armies of our girls and women marching, in comfortable cloth-women's clubs, where women can talk and develop ing—Scouts, they call it in America. We will have thinking for themselves. You shall see."

Yuri and Cherry Blossom had no time to lose. They decided to seek out the old picture dealer, Osaka, who had so unexpectedly befriended the girl before, to his own profit as well. Perhaps there were other Hishigawas to be sold. One could never tell. At any rate, she would be safe there, when even the curious eyes of her former lover failed to discover the deception. Under cover of the darkness, they made their way along

the roads that Hawaka would not take. Here lovers often strolled, plighting their vows, and offering libations to the Honorable Moon, O-Tsuki-Sama, and the red and green eyes of the dragon lanterns shone through tangles of thorns and wistaria, lighting their path.

CHAPTER VII

HAWAKA disappeared under cover of the darkness toward the Honjo. It was here that the lowest class of people, day laborers, as well as beggars and the outcasts of humanity had their living quarters, sordid though they may be. This was one of the kichinyador, or inns, which the police permit to be operated, though often aware that the most flagrant crimes and vices are practised within.

But Hawaka could not discriminate in his forms of pleasure. He had very little money. And again, it was not a night's rest he was seeking, but a safe place in which to gamble.

He entered a house, the door of which was always open in order to attract patronage—and often robbers. He looked carelessly at the ill-assorted crowd, who regarded him with hostility as not being exactly one of their kind. Nor was Hawaka accustomed to being among them, although their pleasures and their vices were his.

The air, fetid because of lack of ventilation, reeked with foul body odors of the motley assemblage. Coolies, toothless, evil-eyed, their garments wet with the perspiration of toil, bandied words with stall-keepers who sold flowers made out of dough, menials of the bake-shops. Grimy-faced workers from the rice-fields, bare-

legged, tormented the vendors of boiled fish, plundering half-empty cans of their final contents. There were others, outcasts and pariahs, the unwashed and unclean, accompanied by painted denizens of the street, women whose morality was below the standards of those of the Yoshiwara, where the fiery furnace of lust was fed by over three thousand victims.

Knife grinders, wicked of countenance, leered slyly at one to discover easy approaches for theft. The hawkers of soup, honorable enough as to calling, claimed courtesy from their neighbors in poverty, the clog-menders, but hot words arising, each fell back on his own ground, scenting trouble.

Hawaka greeted them familiarly, assuming an equality with them that inwardly he did not feel. But discretion had taught him the value of friendliness in the Honjo.

A mass of soiled, ragged bedding, the futon, showed in one corner, where they would all be sleeping, arm to arm, later on the floor. Already here and there a man's figure was outlined vaguely in the shadows, sonorously passing off into dreams, insensible to his beggarly surroundings.

A half-broken fire box furnished the only heat which the chill of the evening demanded, in its scant handful of charcoal. On their knees before it crouched some dirty coolies, nibbling greedily at hard little rice cakes to satisfy their hunger, their bony hands red in streaks where the traces or shafts of the rickshaw cut the skin.

Cries of anger and despair, and the wail of hunger, at times rose above the growls of half-starved dogs, the scavengers of the crumbling hovels, which prowled

in the darkness, vicious through want of food and drink. Beasts were they all, the animal not more than the human, except that nature had provided the latter with the greater capability for suffering—and protected the dumb brute by rendering it less susceptible to pain.

Hawaka waited till some of the coolies were prostrate in slumber on the floor; then the proprietor silently beckoned him, opening a tiny door no bigger than the breadth of a man's shoulders, a black hole in the dim light, and they crept down some narrow stairs, entering a low-ceilinged room underground; yet it was not uncomfortable, and here could they play uninterruptedly, for hours, if necessary, and smoke the "pipe." For Hawaka was equally fond of the drug as well as the gaming table, and life to him meant only the opportunities afforded by chance for such indulgences.

Silent, almost motionless, rigid in their earnestness, with the clerk from the office, the three men played as time passed. A few sounds, faint, harsh, crept down from the room above them, the lewd songs of some of the coolies; some women had joined the crowd, wives of the laborers, hired out by their masters, and they joined in, in flat unmusical tones, coarse shouts of laughter greeting their verses. It was called the shinnai, and amid its bars one could hear the snarl of quarrels between men, or the pitiful sobs of a young girl, crouched alone in one corner, who had been brought in by a rickshaw man and who refused to allow him to come near her. For two sen a bowl, they could eat udon, that favorite of many of the working class. But no one here had two sen to spend on such luxuries, it would seem.

"Beaten, Hawaka," whispered the proprietor of the kichinyador. He was a bloated, white-faced Oriental, with thick Mongolian lips and hideous eyes—eyes that combined the glitter of a serpent with the bestial glare of an animal.

"Once again, Masuki." His voice betrayed no trace of the fear he entertained for the inn keeper. It was imperious, and not eager.

The cards and dice thrown on the table made the only sound to break the stillness in the room. The songs above had ceased; they were too far underground to catch any of the street noises, and besides there was neither window nor door to admit such. A lantern above cast a flame of red over Matsuki's ugly face; he knew he would win, just as he was certain of what the stakes were to be. He had played thus with Hawaka for over a year; the boy had never paid the debt; in fact, Matsuki always made sure that he could not before entering the game, for he did not want to be paid in money. That was it. There was something better than money at stake, and each played with deadly skill, determined to win.

"Beaten, Hawaka," whispered the keeper of the kichinyador for the second time, his long fingers drawing in the dice. He looked at Hawaka's imperturbable face cruelly. And although he hated him for the treachery and wickedness he knew he possessed, yet he admired his control of emotion, which kept every facial muscle in check, his expression unchanging. "Tomorrow, you pay up. Hear? I give you one day. After that, we shall see, my young lord. We shall see."

"Have it your way," Hawaka arose gracefully, although his heart was beating in terror at the unleashed savagery in Matsuki's eyes. "You win. I lose."

"Tomorrow you pay? Hear?" Matsuki shook his arm with no little strength, showing his long yellow teeth, like an animal waiting for prey.

"As you say," Hawaka replied, indifferently. He could not ascend the stairs until the clerk unlocked the tiny door at the top, which had been secured when they came down. His stoicism carried him over a dangerous minute. He knew he was powerless in their hands, just as well as he understood that Matsuki did not want money for the debt. Otherwise, they would have killed him, secure in the secret hiding place under ground, fully aware that the police would never know. There had been other disappearances in the Honjo. Nobody bothered, and it made less charity for the government to dispense, or room for another derelict in the inn. But Hawaka knew he was more valuable to Matsuki and his schemes living than dead.

"I say, hurry, will you?" he ordered imperiously, his arrogance saving his neck. The clerk, an emaciated, ghoul-faced creature in a dirty blue coat and frayed wadded breeches, ascended the steps rat-fashion, looking not unlike the pest with his oily head and misshapen form. The key turned the lock, the door shoved noiselessly open, and followed by Matsuki, Hawaka came next.

His insolence took on greater strength as he felt himself safe. He tossed a sen on the counter with a grandiloquent mien.

"Give that to your Buddha in prayers," he said, strutting toward the door.

"Sayonara! Sayonara!"

Matsuki rushed after him, not confident of his intentions.

"Tomorrow," he said meaningly.

But Hawaka had turned the corner of the house; even if he had heard he would have given no sign; on ground he was safe. Matsuki could rant and threaten as much as he liked. When he made up his mind he would pay the debt in his own fashion.

It was not late. The moon, a silver ball in the sky, hung half-way up, between heaven and earth. He slouched against the side of a stall, where bruised fish were sold in the day-time; the odors emitted were not pleasant, but he wanted to think. Matched against the cunning of the inn-keeper, Hawaka could hold his own. He would beat the crafty gamester at his own game. He incurred the debt for money, and it should be paid back in money. There was a way to earn it.

The City of Forbidden Women lies behind a big entrance gate, the Omon; the tram stops at the Kaminari Mon, or Thunder Gate of the park. Under the twelve-story tower there is a street along its north side where profligates and vagabonds loiter; and rickshaw men, young, vigorous, rush their fare to favorite haunts in their fleet-wheeled vehicles—past the Look-Back Willow Tree, whose tradition of the sweetheart, reluctant at the parting with her lover at dawn, as he looked back, is the one monument, intangible though it is, to sentiment, in this place where souls are bartered for money.

The Omon, or Great Gate, is the only passage into the Yoshiwara. Hawaka, familiar with the way, swung boldly along the street, for custom in the Orient sanctions this, and one is not forced to concealment or evasion. From the guide houses, the mellow, harsh sound of a samisen, accompanied by the unmusical thumping of a drum from upstairs rooms, fitted in with the many noises arising from the thoroughfare.

Behind latticed fronts, the flaunting red and purple silk kimonos of the painted girls, lure of the houses, showed; some, sullen-faced, puffed not ungracefully at long bamboo pipes, for here women universally smoke. At the end of the street, despite the hour, groups of people, curiosity seekers, men of the town, students, merchants of the better classes, not insensible to the demands of appetite, were testing the savories of rice, or bean and sugar cakes while enjoying their tepid saké. Pretty young girls, almond-eyed, gaily dressed, served their customers, with expressive smiles and languishing airs. Hawaka did not have sufficient money to patronize such luxuries; he knew one of the girls; often a kiss secured a bean cake, and he never hesitated to try its efficacy. Then, too, it was fashionable to be seen among the swells at the Yoshiwara, indicating as it did the possession of money and certain standing.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the east and west, favors to the old sick one," a beggar, concealed among the prosperous crowd, whined incessantly, over and over, in the fretful inflections of the mendicant.

Hawaka waved his hand at pretty little Yellow Poppy, who had enjoyed his embraces before. Her eyes, alert,

sly, motioned him to the side, where coolies brought the wares into the booth.

He nudged the beggar to follow him. "Ladies of the east and west, favors to the old sick one," monotonously chanted the filthy bundle of rags, conspicuous among the well-dressed frequenters of the street. His plaintive refrain caught Yellow Poppy's sharp little ears; her face mute with pity, she thrust her hand under the shelf and snatched some cakes and other edibles, held in reserve for expected crowds. Hawaka leant insinuatingly toward her, reaching out for the generous supply she held.

"Good Yellow Poppy," he murmured tenderly, "I shall say seven prayers to Buddha to bless you." And as he took the bean cakes and the rice and fish from her, he stole a kiss in the dark, for he knew it was expected of him; and then, too, it helped pay for what he intended to eat; and as for the beggar whose implorations had obtained it, he should be content with the scraps, if he left any.

Greedy devouring, Hawaka sped away to a safe retreat, thankful for the dimness of the lanterns. If Yellow Poppy ever upbraided him for it, he would pit his honor against that of a beggar, and also remind her that the stall-keeper prohibited any dispensation of favors. Then, too, there was always the magic of a kiss.

Secure, satisfied, he directed his attention to the accomplishment of the plan by which he hoped to thwart Matsuki.

CHAPTER VIII

JUNE had passed, with its iris fêtes; the proverbial six weeks of rain had ushered in the dreaded dô-yô, or sultry days. Hot, damp clouds of steam made the air intolerable, and even though the goddesses are supposed to wash their garments in the Milky Way, the River of Heaven, at that time, it had little effect on the disagreeable density, which even superstition failed to relieve.

Five hours distant by rail is Sun-Brightness—Nikko, which people love because of its golden shrines; and holy pilgrimages make white processions along its highways, paying reverence to the Shogun Tombs. A noisy stream, the Daiya-gawa, rushes beneath the giant cryptomerias, which solemnly guard their sacred treasures, and red lacquered bridges cross it to the Buddhist temple, where one can pray, and bask in all of the imagery of Yamata Damashii.

Or there was Chuzenji, where fashionable life took up its abode, and indulged in bridge and tennis, while novitiates ascended the sacred mountain day and night.

Twice already had Mrs. Denton's Irish maid packed their trunks in preparation for the journey; but each time the Ambassador, harassed by accumulating political questions, worn out and tired, his fine ascetic face exhibiting the lines of care, had asked for postponement;

for their presence might be imperative in the capitol city, for a rivalry between the ancient army clan, Cho-Shu, and the equally old clan of the navy, the Satsuma, was not an omen of peaceful conditions, and without warning a grave issue might arise.

"But you don't think there is any danger, do you, my dear?" Mrs. Denton interrupted her engrossment in her fancy work long enough to ask, aware of her husband's incessant hours of application and the demands made on him by a constant string of visitors. "I hope nothing is wrong?"

"How shall I answer you, yes or no?" he tried to reply, evasively. They were still in the breakfast room, and a native servant was bringing in repeatedly little pots of hot coffee and diminutive plates of tiny rice cakes. "The mind of the Oriental is unfathomable; while to the casual observer the cause may not seem important, we can only guess at the seething, inextricable power below the surface."

"I thought it had something to do with the Royal engagement?" Mrs. Denton always evinced a purely feminine interest, whenever possible.

"Superficially, yes," her husband put a lump of sugar in his cup, stirring it gravely, and reached out for another in his abstraction, but her agile hand caught his, and arrested the action; and sugar so hard to keep in these hot, steaming days.

"Superficially," he repeated, brought back to the subject. "The mother of Princess Negako, who is betrothed to the Crown Prince, is a sister of Prince Shimaya, who is the head of the Satsuma clan. But the power behind

the Imperial throne is Field-Marshal Yamata, who is the avowed leader of the Cho-Shu faction. I understand that it is he who is asking that the engagement be annulled, and this will start very serious trouble. For the Intellectuals will support the Imperial household, upholding the bethrothal. Nawaka, the Imperial Minister, is also a Cho-Shu leader."

"It does not sound so serious," Mrs. Denton put in, cheerfully. "Always the path of love, isn't it?"

"My dear, for a diplomat's wife, you evince little discrimination. I am repeating that this is given out as the reason; it is the surface only. We do not know what lies under it. There are the Korean malcontents to take sides, and that does not promise well. Yesterday, the home of the Field Marshal was rudely invaded, and he was ordered by an unknown foe to resign from the ministry. He has not done so yet. I must preserve the neutrality of the diplomat or I might utter some rash suggestions."

"And that is?"

Mr. Denton looked around the room, satisfied as to his purely domestic audience. Grace was answering long-neglected letters, as the mail left that day; and Cousin Em and the Major were lazily arguing as to the relative advantages of ice bags or thermos to reduce temperature. The weather made both very appropriate.

"I think if a new Imperial minister were put in, it would all blow over," said Mr. Denton to his wife. "There's Baron Makino, a fine fellow, an Oxford man—in fact, a liberal. I'm sure it would bring immediate tranquility."

"Then why make so much of it?" she cried gaily, matching her silks for a new flower. "It is so unimportant."

"Unimportant?" The Ambassador arose and walked up and down the room, his hands behind his back, his brow clouded over knotty problems. "Is it unimportant to be awakened perhaps in the morning and find the whole town under heavy bombardment? Is it unimportant if we should be unconsciously drawn into this vortex, forced to take sides, and have to bring American troops over here to determine our status? Already the two clans are listing their supporters; in the streets of the Honjo there is fighting going on."

"Gracious, is it as bad as that?" She jumped nervously to her feet. Her work dropped unnoticed to the floor. Bombardments were serious, she well knew, with no possibility of getting out of the house, and food running low, and in this climate, where the proverbial ice-box could not always be kept well filled. She had had experience once with a bombardment in Mexico, when the revolutionists ran shouting through the streets, with firebrands, and the memory of it and her terror had never deserted her.

"Horace, will we really be bombarded?" she asked earnestly.

"We won't anticipate anything worse than what is happening now," he reassured her. "But I think it might be safe for all of you to remain indoors for a while."

Taka, the functionary at the door, was at the threshold, with a profound bow.

"The Imperial Minister presents his compliments, sir, and requests an immediate audience with you."

Mr. Denton shook his head, disturbed, as he followed him into the ambassadorial offices. The visit assumed an ominous significance.

"This is exciting," Cousin Em cried gaily, relighting her cigarette from an andon, or saucer of burning oil on the taboret nearby. "Bombarded? Major, did you hear? We are going to be bombarded, perhaps. Have you ever been bombarded before? Who doesn't love a new sensation, just as one must try caviare, or monkey glands, or love." She cast a malicious, laughing glance at the Major, portly and unromantic in a bamboo chair near the open balcony, as he moved uncomfortably under her directness.

"It's no laughing matter." Mrs. Denton had been impressed by her husband's seriousness. "And if the servants take sides, we'll be deserted. I think I would better go at once and order an extra supply of food that will keep. Chocolate is always a wise selection, and we could subsist on that if everything else failed."

"And cigarettes—and matches," Cousin Em called after her, as she hurried out, dropping the contents of her work basket behind her in her haste.

The Major arose, and stood politely at attention; it was due her rank, and seeing so many little brown servants fall respectfully before her every day made him feel very remiss in social observances; but with his increasing portliness, it was irksome. He felt conscious of Cousin Em's cool, analytical eyes, and he blushed disagreeably.

"Sit down, do." She motioned him to a chair and he meekly took it. Somehow he lost all of his fiery

nature when in her presence, and almost involuntarily depended on her suggestions.

"You don't smoke, Major?" she asked sweetly, blowing tiny blue rings through the air in his face without deeming it necessary to apologize.

"Smoke, no thank you," he sputtered, swallowing most of it, without relish. "I must draw the line at women's habits, you know."

She laughed merrily.

"It is so good for the nerves," she replied tranquilly, "for the nerves, Major. I do believe you are a little bit nervous—now, aren't you?"

"I admit it. Many things make me nervous. One, especially."

"And that is——?"

"You," he said rudely, and walked out, relishing her look of discomfiture.

But proximity has much to do with friendship, and in the limited circle that formed the diplomatic throng, they were thrown in daily contact, so that trivial differences counted for very little.

The clouds on the political horizon, however, could not prevent Mrs. Denton from some of her shopping expeditions; for she thoroughly enjoyed this feminine pursuit. And she had grown quite accustomed to sitting on the floor mats while bargaining, as the boys, polite, neat in their blue jackets, brought out expensive fabrics for her selection, all artistically wrapped in pretty yellow cloth. One must always bargain, for the shopkeeper expected it and his goods were marked up especially to meet such a contingency.

She knew always when to say "Takai and Takusan"; and that would be the propitious moment for the barter to begin. It was not always necessary to buy, for, by earning the reputation of being difficult to please, Mrs. Denton had succeeded in influencing the shop keepers in bringing their choicest products to interest her.

For that reason neither Grace nor Cousin Em liked to shop with her, for it was resolved into a very dull process of sordidness. Instead, accompanied by the Major, they would ramble through the interesting streets, knowing that with her waiting rickshaw she was safe enough and would return at the proper time.

Sometimes they were joined on the way by Deering, after his duties in his offices were over, and he would find time immeasurably heavy on his hands in the strange country; for one cannot stifle homesickness with scenery, and although he had heroically reasoned his attitude towards Grace into an impersonal one, detached, not intimate, yet the utter dispassionate friendliness of the two women meant much to him in those first despondent days when he wished that he had ruled against sentiment and had never come. And there was nearly the full year of it still to endure.

Interest guided them past the dark workshops, open on one side to the street; within, the rice-pounders, scantily attired, tossing yellow clouds of dried husks up and down with their paddles; unsmiling, silent, inscrutable. Not less industrious were the old umbrella makers, the fires of youth spent, crouching on the floor, their thin, quick fingers twisting the reed and rattan into symmetrical beauty; basket makers, with stacks of brilliant red and blue flowers heaped around them, as

finishing decoration of their wares; and the clay-image moulders, out in the sunshine, incessantly at work—silent, unsmiling, inscrutable.

“They are busy little fellows,” the Major praised them. “Like little machines, and not a bit more talkative.”

His eye was arrested by an object before them, a step down the road; a small brown housewife was vigorously chopping an odorous huge radish for her lord’s meal, her little arms rising and falling with marvelous force as she wielded the blade.

“Lord, how they work,” he continued, half-pityingly.

“Yes, and for so little,” Cousin Em replied in her practical way. “She is only preparing her husband’s dinner. Always for the men. The women are the industrious ones of the nation. They are slaves, poor little things. No matter in what walk of life, in business, in work and in love. The woman has no alternative.”

“That is what I most admire in them, their willingness and desire to wait on the male,” the Major argued. “To one who is familiar only with the inverse rule—a rule carried to the ridiculous, leading them on a figurative string—why, it’s positively exhilarating.”

“I have always noticed in life that the ones who are so easily led, on a string, as you call it, are invariably the ones who want to be led, Major,” Cousin Em retorted, cheerfully.

He did not reply.

“The position of the women here is actual slavery,” she went on, with increased eloquence, knowing that she had routed him. “She cannot select her mate; once married she must take dictation first from her husband,

next her father-in-law, her mother-in-law, then her own son, and so on. She can be divorced for any of seven reasons, including disobedience to her mother-in-law, gossiping, quarreling, or anything else her lord and master wishes to accuse her of. If he wants to free himself of her, the reason is ready in advance. And, poor little thing, if she happens by accident to be in possession of her husband's love, at any time, for family reasons, the wishes of his august parents, he can take another wife, without going through the formality of the ceremony, and put her in the same house. Poor little brown sparrows. I pity them. If the women of Japan could throw off this unjust oppression, and win emancipation, they would put their male geniuses to shame. Give them a chance. They are the ones who have instilled filial devotion in the children, have made them capable of greatness. If Japan has famous men today, take off your hats to the women of Japan for making them so."

She stopped, breathless over such a long eulogy, her eyes sparkling with her enthusiasm.

"Hear! Hear!" cried Deering, shaking his head approvingly. He might add other arraignments to hers, conditions such as little Flower Garden was forced into—and even worse. His face grew serious as he thought of her. Every morning, on awakening, he heard the faint, unmusical, dismal sound of the samisen, and the undeveloped, quavering voice as Flower Garden sang softly to herself in the little enclosure at the rear that almost connected with that of his own cottage. Sometimes, drawn irresistibly to the shoji, he looked in curiosity at the dainty little form, chirping like some

timid wood bird all alone, her black hair looped twice on her little head, showing her to be unmarried, her gay red obi on the blue kimono.

He brought his errant thoughts back with an effort. Cousin Em was talking to him; he did not wish to enter their lively skirmish, but he listened, knowing some reply was expected of him.

"Which for yours, Jack? The slave man or the slave wife?"

Her directness was disconcerting. He had schooled his feeling for Grace so that there was no responsiveness within him at sight of her—when formerly it set in vibration a thousand and one tiny joys, like some wonderful elixir. His will and his pride had fortified him. Yet, he unconsciously sent a little glance in her direction before he answered. He could not tell whether she heard the inquiry or not; and he felt intuitively that she would have no interest whatever in his reply. In fact, she was going over, in abstraction, a list of articles she had written down, and her forehead was drawn together in two little lines of perplexity as she hesitated over a possible choice of linen or imported crash for some new guest towels.

"I have always put woman on a pedestal," he said, blushing absurdly, feeling awkward over his admission; it was old-fashioned, ridiculous, and thoroughly behind the times. "And I couldn't imagine her stepping off, even for love, to be my slave."

The Major halted their advance, wiping his moist face, his rotund cheeks flaming under the heat. It was warm, with a peculiar dampness that sent streams of moisture down one's spine at the least exertion. At least

he found it so. "But you can't practise western standards in these Oriental countries," he said testily. "Our staid, sober ideas of life don't belong here; these little teapot people would be topsy-turvy if we tried to force them on them. Climate and custom make them what they are; for, after all, as some one said before, morals are merely a matter of geography."

"Well, there's such a thing as the hired wife—another form of the slavery that exists here," Cousin Em said. She was carrying a green sunshade, to provide protection for the eyes in the bright sunlight, and she twirled the handle over her shoulder, waiting for the ignition that she knew would follow.

But the Major had had sufficient frays for the warm day, and moved on in determination. "Have they assailed you, Jack?" She threw the question over her shoulder to him.

He caught up with her.

"Assailed, yes." It was forced on him that Grace was within earshot; her face was turned away, but the red showed on the line of her cheeks. She was visibly annoyed. "But, as I have just said, I have put woman on a pedestal; it will not be my fault if she is ever knocked off."

Grace faced them, her eyes blazing indignation.

"I think this conversation is worse than absurd," she cried, including both of them like culprits in her condemnation. "I'm ashamed of you, Cousin Em. Come, Major," she hurried forward and grabbed his arm with purpose. "Will you show me that dear little pagoda tea house across the street? This must be very tiresome for you, too." She slipped her arm through his, piloting

him with determination between the swiftly-running coolies, fish hawkers, and clouds of steam, hot, disagreeable, from the vendors of boiling food. The Major looked back, resigned, unhappy at being deprived of their companionship.

Cousin Em tucked her hand into Deering's, laughing heartily.

"My dear Jack," she said with maternal tenderness, patting his arm sympathetically. "I almost wish you had taken a hired wife. You are going through the process just now of a desperate remedy—to cure you of a desperate disease. Don't think I haven't noticed. I've had a heartache or two myself, and I know the signs. You'll be all the better for it. For, you know, one doesn't require medicine unless he needs to be cured. Remember that. You must be cured." She met his eyes expressively.

He laughed, carelessly, almost happily. He was rapidly discovering that he was emerging safely from his undeserved purification, which, if not by fire, had caused him anguish enough.

"You'll have a reward, yet." She nodded her head, the brilliant green plume on her hat shaking agitatedly with the movement. "Some day you'll find the right girl." She regarded him approvingly. He was clean cut, well groomed, the type that women like. Erect, with fine physical proportions, his handsome face showed refinement and nobility of character. The smile which flashed often over his countenance carried something boyish and irresistible with it, which made quick friends for him. She sighed, meditatively. Romance seemed

so far away from her; its voice had never really called her; she had never felt its charm, its glamor. She felt a thoroughly feminine sort of envy for the woman he would finally love.

CHAPTER IX

ON ONE of the by-streets of the Ginza, there is a god, the Jizo—a god of little children. Many times during the month can one place offerings before the image, whose benign protection is supposed to be directed over the young of both sexes; and, too, if one wants offspring, success will be assured by making the proper gifts. For the gods must be appeased.

Flower Garden often stole away in the night during Edwards' absence, profound in her belief in the Jizo. Had not the aged couple far past the road of the Green Jade Horse, prayed and given honorable rice repeatedly to the Jizo, and one morning found a chubby little girl on the door step?

And the old flower seller, half blind, lame—a tiny son lay right in his own bamboo cottage one evening when he came home to prepare his lonely meal. It was the great Jizo. Soon it would be the Seventh of the month, one of the first days of the ennichi, or festival. She, too, would prepare some honorable rice cakes, even some wonderful birds of barley gluten, for the Jizo sometimes was voracious and gave special favors when properly appeased. And, if the Jizo smiled on her, surely it would please her honorable lord. Then he could not think of ever going away—of leaving her. For ever since his honorable Mr. Foreigner friend had

come, he had been different. He had not loved her any more. But he had been kind, and he paid her a lot of money, 1 yen punctually every month; but he had changed. Tears stole into her sad little eyes as she thought of him. She had heard them talk, often, far into the night, when they thought she was asleep, of the time they would go back to the far-off country, next year. The year was going, swiftly, rapidly; the days were passing, just as the golden leaves fell from the trees. Soon came the lily season, days of beauty, of rich fragrance, when the great golden hearted flowers opened their petals to the sun, sending out ravishing sweetness—the purplish mottled *Auratum*, heavily odorous; the virginal madonna lilies; the blue lilies, faintly perfumed, and the scarlet pungent lilies. Flower Garden was very unhappy. A soft, vaporous cloud of incense drifted out of a temple at the angle of the street. She glided in, on her pigeon feet, gave a coin in the offering box to the gods; and, as is the custom, clapped her hands softly as she murmured in pious voice the imploring *Namu Amida Butsu*. Hear me, Great Lord Buddha. Surely, with the rice cakes, this would be sufficient to gratify her prayers, and it was with more elation of spirits that she toiled up the hill to the bamboo cottage again and made her simple preparations for her master's return.

She got her *samisen* and gently sang "Come Let Us Dance the Dance of the Honorable Garden" out at the back, for it would not have been proper for her to sit on the tiny porch in front.

The dim glare of a lantern, warmly crimson, showed through the *shoji* in the Honorable Foreigner's cottage,

and the sound of voices, masculine, foreign in their rapid manner of speaking, sounded distinctly in the stillness of the night. She recognized one as belonging to her own lord; and knew that the other speaker was the newcomer, who had arrived from the great land far across the sea.

She put down her instrument very noiselessly, listening. They must not know she was there, for it was very wicked to try to hear what other people said when they were alone, for confidences were sacred, and the gods punished.

They were smoking, talking intimately over their cigars, as men do.

"There's no harm done, I assure you, Jack," Edwards was talking, with seriousness. "Flower Garden makes me very comfortable. I have nothing to complain of. More I cannot ask."

"What if she should love you?"

Edwards laughed heartily at the absurdity of the suggestion.

"These little women don't know the meaning of the word. They know only contentment, and that is probably due to their freedom from small worries. They don't expect fidelity from their men, nor do they ever get it. The Japanese woman is self-effacing, never living her own life, but serving her master or lord. It is not necessary as a rule to perfect her in the arts, for her husband's geisha has been trained to entertain and amuse. The wife is not expected to. Their fashions never change, their household cares are small, there is none of the hard work westerners perform, owing to their simple mode of living. Flower Garden has very

little to do, for I am away all day. I never ask her what she does, anyway. Our lives do not meet, but cross, each going his own way, according to the custom. Come, have I exculpated myself? You have never appeared to approve."

"I don't, not in any sense," Deering replied promptly. "But I'm too deeply fond of you, Edwards, to let it come between our friendship. First of all, there's Anne Manners, back home."

Edwards' face turned a shade paler, as he looked around at his friend, disturbed at the unexpected subject.

He laughed, forcedly, trying to regain his composure.

"I used to think she cared—for me." He blew the ashes from the tip of his cigar. "But East—is West, three years away, and while one may not forget, one tries not to remember."

"Do you think she would like it?" Deering pursued the topic with persistence. He had put his cigar down, deeply interested in the conversation.

"No woman would," Edwards admitted, after a pause. "But there are lots of things women don't know, even in our own country. And being engaged to Anne Manners did not always imply that one was a celibate."

"My God, man, you make me angry." Deering jumped to his feet, pacing the floor, trying to master his irritation. "It's hopeless, I see, trying to persuade you to my opinion. Here are two men, both of standing, equally endowed, and yet each adopting a different standard—and I must do you the justice to admit that our customs support your theory just as much as they support mine. But I think what you do is wrong; and

it is not only wrong to Flower Garden, but it is just as wrong to Anne Manners, whom you are engaged to, and to yourself. That's my candid opinion, and you wanted it."

Edwards lightly shrugged his shoulders; he had an inward reluctance to changing his habits, although twinges of conscience had asserted themselves more than once, and excuses implied guilt always.

"It won't be long before we'll both be going back, Jack," he said, gravely. "Perhaps I'll have the courage then to tell Anne—if she still cares. I know I do, for her; but what right has a man situated as I am, far off in a strange land, absent for three years, to expect the constancy of a woman at all? If I should tell you what the first year of my existence here was, you would pity me; I actually suffered, was terrorized at my loneliness. That caused the whole trouble."

"I can well believe it, Edwards. I'm going through it now," Deering said sympathetically. He did not lose the sudden, sharp look his friend gave him, understanding much. "It's—it's—hell."

He leaned his head against his arm, weakly giving in to his feelings, afraid that he was going to act like some great overgrown schoolboy, not man enough to refrain from tears. He cleared his throat in determination.

"Cha?" He looked expectantly at Edwards, his hands raised to summon Fuji. Outdoors, near the closed shoji, joining the tiny enclosure in the rear, something had fallen, with a loud noise. They rushed out, agilely leaping over the frail bamboo obstruction between. There was nothing there; but on the hard, sandy ground

was a small object; and Deering stooped and picked it up; it was a samisen, and one of the strings had broken in the fall.

CHAPTER X

CHERRY BLOSSOM had met with much difficulty in persuading the aged shop keeper, Osaka, to give her employment in helping him sell the Hishigawa pictures; for the shop was so small that the presence of even one more person cramped it uncomfortably, and one more mouth to feed meant that much less money. But her distress finally found a tender spot in his withered heart, and perhaps he should congratulate himself on the good luck he was having in engaging her; for at the beginning of the dô-yô his painters were beginning to bring in the new assortment of pictures, freshly painted after the style of the famous artist, yet moist from the brush. And what mattered the name? Hishigawas they were, even if his workmen made them fresh every week. And people must live.

And what perhaps had the most power to induce him to accept her services was the fact, the knowledge, that she knew his secret, the flagrant deception practised on his patrons. There was undoubtedly a great Hishigawa, and dead indeed for some two hundred years; but what triumph of his brush remained was priceless, and even the Imperial family possessed but few.

So Osaka displayed the new Hishigawas high up on the platform, their colors softened by the light of the lantern, and carefully shrouded with veils, to enhance

their beauty—and incidentally prevent detection. These pictures were for sale, but merit alone did not always sell a picture, even when assisted by a famous name; so he kept one painting for posing Cherry Blossom, the canvas cut away merely enough to allow her head to be shoved in and poised. It was the head that sold a picture, anyway; for the drapery mattered little. And when any one bought, judging the merits from the living face, he promptly dispatched one of the freshly painted arrivals, and Cherry Blossom continued posing, to make another sale.

It was a simple Oriental process that worked smoothly enough. For tourists were plentiful, and it was much cheaper than teakwood and cloisonné. And with trains leaving punctually, one could always exactly compute the time for delivery, so that before the package was unwrapped the boat was out on the high seas, leaving the nearest port.

Cherry Blossom, however, was an innocent participant in Osaka's scheme. To her, it offered a safe place of concealment from the three dangers threatening her: to be sent unwilling to America, to be put in the Yoshiwara, and the overtures of her false lover.

Her life was limited to nocturnal privileges to breathe the air; then to steal stealthily back, and up to the platform, where she slept. Never in the daytime did she go out, for fear of being discovered. And she knew the cruel vigilance of Hawaka, and could surmise what his vengeance would be if he found her; it was that realization that made her anxious for Yuri, but she dared not make any attempt to see her.

Behind a curtain draped over the picture, she sat on a small stool, nibbling at rice cakes, always in readiness to thrust her head with its artificial cherry blossoms through the hole in the canvas, in perfect harmony with the painted flowers in the Hishigawa lady's hands. She knew when to do it; a cough, rasping, penetrating, from Osaka, and she was prepared. Then he would climb up the crooked steps, whisper a few more cautions to her, and with an important manner slowly pull the curtains aside, revealing the living picture.

Trade was sometimes dull between trains. After that it was when the red and green lanterns began to shine out on the street that Osaka warned her most, for that was the great shopping hour, in the night, and suited him better also, in the favorable display it made for his pictures.

One evening his cough of caution came unexpectedly, as she was preparing to rest from her rigid posture. She hastily got in readiness for him to exhibit. But her ear, quick to distinguish the quality of a voice, recognized at once the tones of the Honorable Foreigner who had the exciting encounter with Shiko for the Hishigawa. He was speaking as if in annoyance, and she heard the words, though not always understanding.

"Osaka," Deering was saying, "you didn't send me the right picture. It is not the one I purchased here that night. If there has been a mistake, all right; but otherwise, you give back my money. It is not the same."

Osaka remained immovable, his brain traveling swiftly. He could not afford to lose the sale; in fact, the money was already spent.

"Honorable Foreigner got picture at cheap price," he rubbed his hands together in his inimitable manner.

"Cheap, or not, it's not the same. Here, old man, I'll give you a chance to make it good. Where's the one I saw that night? Come, I gave you a good price for it. There's no need for us to call in any one else to settle it, is there?"

Osaka trembled in fear; it was not the wrath of the gods he was afraid of as much as that of the police. And his shop would be taken from him. It must be such misfortune was overtaking him because he had forgotten to say nine lantern prayers, instead of five. Tomorrow, in the Asakusa Temple——

"Where is it?" Deering was peremptorily asking, moving about, looking around the walls. Osaka remained immovable, watching him narrowly.

"I have Hishigawa all right, Honorable Foreigner," he breathed softly. "It look the same, it is always the same face the great master painted; but it cost more, much more than the picture the Honorable Foreigner bought. Come, you shall see." He coughed loudly, and there was an undetected movement of the curtains above the platform. Osaka climbed the stairs, and slowly pulled the thick folds aside. "You see?" he said, nodding his half-shaven head. "Always the same beautiful woman, he painted. Always the sakura, the cherry blossom; but it cost more."

Deering remained before it, his handsome head elevated, his eyes glowing with admiration; the old fellow deserved praise for his selection of such masterpieces, such human likeness in the flesh colorings. There was no comparison between the lost art of 200 years ago

and that of today. The girl's face looked real, breathing, living. He turned away, aflame over it, his heart throbbing, his throat dry. It made no difference what it cost, he must have it; so had he felt about the other picture, but on unwrapping it the next day he had experienced a peculiar chill of disappointment; for it seemed to have lost the inexplicable, mysterious charm he had felt for it when he had the exciting opposition from Shiko.

"I'll take it," he said, abruptly, taking out his wallet. "And this time, Osaka, send me the right one. You hear? If you don't, I'll have to take some steps about it. You understand? My Satsuma boy, Fuji, will come for it."

Osaka took his money, his face sad. He watched his customer out, then he threw the coin on the ground and spat on it, stamping his feet in insult on it, over and over.

"It was worth at least 200 yen more," he cried brokenly, weeping in anger, his sphinx-like mien for once torn with long-repressed emotion. "Osaka is ruined." He wept on the edge of his wide blue sleeve, wept, though it seemed to be a strange, tearless grief, for his tiny, sullen eyes were as dry as ever when he turned around. "If I send the new Hishigawas my painters bring me, Honorable Foreigner, black dog that he is, will send it back and have the police after me. He has bought you, in the picture. He has ruined me." He shook with anger, like a reed tossed in a gusty wind, furious over his plight.

Cherry Blossom's tender heart was moved at sight of his grief. She touched his arm very politely in sympathy.

"Don't cry, Osaka; don't cry. If Honorable Foreigner has bought me, I'll go. We will not let Osaka be ruined this way. We will not let the hateful police come. First, though, must you tell Honorable Foreigner's boy when he comes for the picture the truth. He is a Satsuma; he never tell. He can take me tonight, and fix the wall so that I can be in the picture as here. And he must promise that Honorable Foreigner never pull the curtain aside except at night, under a green lantern, or the picture would be ruined, as the painting is very, very old. You remember that, Osaka—or I tell on you, too."

Deering had expected to be late in returning to his cottage that night, for there had been an excursion by moonlight, to witness one of the customs of the country, to listen to singing insects, the mushi-kiki, out on the grassy plains edging the town, and he had remained at the Embassy for a light refreshment, clinging to a bit of sentiment for home, as late as he felt it excusable.

Fuji was ever so patiently waiting for him, for it was his duty to close the tiny cottage for the night, making them secure against the dreaded invasions of prowling dogs—often marauders, in an effort to rob. He knocked his cropped head thrice against the floor in deference.

Honorable Foreigner's picture had come. He had hung it exactly as Osaka had taught him, high up; but five steps across the room one could see it. Honorable Foreigner possessed a great treasure, 200 years old. If

the honorable sunlight fell on it, too bad; it would all be gone, dry up like dust. Such was the way of a very old canvas. Yet they cost much. Perhaps Honorable Foreigner would see his picture now? Often, it made good dreams.

Deering assented, somewhat mechanically. He was tired, and the unusual noises of the mushi-kiki, grasshoppers, cicadas, locusts—everything possible that a provident nature had endowed with disturbing power, for self-protection, had made his head ache; for he had all of the westerner's aversion to insects, singing or biting.

"Yes, yes," he repeated, longing for his narrow American bed in the next room, made isolated by four hinged screens.

Fuji jerked a thick blue curtain aside, and folded his arms at attention, his ear alert for approbation.

Deering took five steps as directed across the floor; it brought him against the wall of his toy house; then he turned around.

He had the real Hishigawa at last! It was beautiful. The hair was not black as that of the Japanese women; the cheeks were pink and white. The eyes were modestly cast down, and cherry blossoms hung over each little ear. He owned it; it was his! It was the happiest moment of his life. It aroused him strangely. He ordered Fuji to bring him a chair. Then he looked at the beautiful face, almost unable to look away, wishing that it were possible that she would raise her eyes, amazed at the spell the ancient picture cast over him.

"You may go, Fuji," he said, recalled to his presence.

Fuji remained where he was, in stubbornness.

Deering looked at him peremptorily, annoyed at his disobedience.

"Did you hear me?" he asked, in a tone of authority.

"Honorable Foreigner forgets that too much light will ruin his picture," Fuji said softly, undisturbed at the sign of anger. "Fuji wait to put the curtain in place. There is always another night to see it."

Deering laughed, goodhumoredly. He gave a parting look at the picture, happy over his new possession. He experienced a curious sense of having defrauded the old dealer; he was quite right in what he said. It was cheap at any price. Tomorrow he would stop and give him more money.

He could not sleep. The picture, with its wistful beauty, haunted him. Yet he had promised not to look at it, for fear of ruining it. And he tossed on his narrow bed, berating himself for his seeming lunacy, and attributing it to the noisy mushi-kiki.

Morning brought him still further experiences; in the midst of his honorable breakfast, a procession of quaint, dwarfed little creatures appeared, one after the other, encircling his honorable table and chair in gentle determination. The older one, plainly the mother from her method of procedure, led the miniature parade. It was Edwards' honorable mother-in-law, and she had come prepared to tempt him with some of her saleable daughters. It was purely a business transaction. O-Satu, Miss Sugar, was shoved back and forth before him, strutting like the diminutive peacock she was, with

her freshly-oiled hair and glittering gilt ornaments. And she possessed several wicked false faces, such as the *Mäiko*, or professional dancers, used for entertainment—even a geisha could not offer more, siren though she was. Then there were *O-Mika*, *New Moon*; *O-Nat Su*, *Miss Summer*; *O-Kiku*, *Miss Chrysanthemum*; *Miss Delight*, *Miss Salt*.

Saucy, sprightly young things who should have been in school, with pretty oblique eyes, painted red lips; but *Deering* went on eating his honorable rice, undisturbed by such standards of loveliness, attracted, perhaps, by the names, *Butterfly*, *White Bird*, *Climbing Rose*—poor little souls, little butterflies, crushing their tiny wings, bruised, to be hired out in this repulsive slavery.

Madame mother was in despair. She needed three yen very badly, and surely one yen was cheap for a hired wife that could dance and had a few false faces. Honorable foreigners were too hard to please—and very rude. She angrily marshaled her brood out, snapping out on the threshold the only English she knew, and the first words most of them acquire, “*Dam’ Honorable Foreigner!*”

He hurried to his offices later than usual. Work had never before been so irksome to him, and when he found that he was making a succession of irretrievable blunders, he gave up in despair. He was bewitched. That was it. The interminable *dô-yô*, the hot, sultry days, had affected him. The season had long since passed, but there could be no other reason. He had a longing to be back in his cottage. Was it possible that such a

beautiful maiden, with such haunting charm, ever existed, even 200 years ago? A beauty so potent that it subordinated such trivialities as the two centuries that had elapsed—a beauty that could, after all that time, so strangely affect him.

Night brought relief; the heat had subsided; the whirring insects that simultaneously appear with the lighting of the lanterns were hushed, for a storm had passed out of the west, and been blown farther beyond, but it sufficed to cool the air, and added an intermittent breeze.

Deering refused to have any lights; there was some moonlight, desultory, often obscured; but it suited his mood. He bade Fuji pull the curtain aside from his picture. The glow was sufficient for him to see the beautiful face; he had an unnatural growing sentiment for it, and to sit with it in the tender gloom gave it a queer but delightful sense of intimacy. Surely, charm is indestructible, if it passes the two-century mark.

Fuji obeyed; he felt that he had impressed his Honorable Foreigner very seriously of the cautions he must observe. And the intense admiration he displayed for it proved that he would be very careful.

This was the beginning. Every night, in the subdued light, Deering sat in silent worship before the Hishigawa, calling himself a fanatic, bewildered at his inability to dispel the illusion. He studied every soft girlish curve of the beautiful face, the proud, tender little mouth, the exquisite droop of the downcast lids. This was veritable witchcraft, under which he was powerless.

He had no desire to resume his calls at the Embassy. Cousin Em's hastily scribbled invitations to join them went unanswered. He evaded Edwards, glibly fabricating excuses to keep him away.

One night, driven out of himself by his inexplicable devouring passion for it, he went out, and although the flowers were out of season and therefore very difficult to obtain, he found a place where they were sold; and returning with his arms full of cherry blossoms, forced unnaturally in hot houses, he placed them reverently before his shrine. He loved his beautiful Hishigawa lady.

Then a strange thing happened. As he occupied his customary place across the room from it one night, a thunder storm broke out sharply, as tropical storms do, a fury of blue lightning and the hoarse reverberations from the sky. There was one terrible crash overhead, and the toy structure swayed as if a mighty hand had rudely shaken it. It seemed to him in that one brief, lurid flare of lightning, the head of the beautiful woman turned, rigidly, slightly in the canvas; and for one intolerable, delirious, sweet, cruel moment her great eyes raised and stared across the room into his.

He was going mad. He had dreamed it. The picture had bewitched him. He laughed cynically at his own deception. Yet, the foolish, reiterated words of the aged dealer would recur to him, persistently, as he chanted in his sing-song voice the legend of the Hishigawa lady stepping out of her frame and coming to life. And the chaffinch had done it, too, leaving a hole in the canvas where it stepped out.

He fell on his knees prostrate before it, hardly aware of his own actions, all of his being seething with a mighty surging love for it.

"My love, my beautiful love," he cried, incoherently.

Little Cherry Blossom, very uncomfortable in her position, her head aching from the continued strain of holding it in one place, at first did not understand the strange words he uttered, and his flushed, unhappy face. And when his voice trembled she was frightened. But gradually, as heat dissolves ice, his vehemence set into activity an emotion corresponding to his own, until when he cried out so earnestly, looking at her, it was all she could do to keep from jumping down into his outstretched arms and throwing her arms about his neck. For under the constant fervor of his devotion she was beginning to love him, too, and the more she realized it, the greater grew her determination to disappear before he discovered the deception practised on him.

When Cousin Em, Grace and others of the little circle of friends from home descended on him, to ascertain his delinquency in failing to appear, and his ignoring their summons, she experienced a bitter jealousy; but no one suspected it, as the curtain was drawn over the painting. One of them, a young woman in a pretty evening dress, called him very familiarly Jack and dear; and assured him that they had all missed him very much. And this made Cherry Blossom very unhappy, for she decided it was some one who must care for him very much to call him dear.

A political crisis was approaching; the Imperial engagement had not yet been annulled, nor had it been as yet sanctioned by the two rival clans. Word came down

from the hills of the recruits that were being collected, to be in readiness for action. The Imperial troops were marched every day for practise. It had every aspect of becoming a bitter disturbance, brother against brother.

"Pack up your things, old man," the Major burst in on Deering one evening, puffing laboriously from his climb up the hill. Grace and Cousin Em had accompanied him and were making themselves very much at home with his belongings. "The Ambassador says we will be under bombardment positively by dawn. Twice has it been averted, by Oriental diplomacy. It'll be hades let loose if they begin, for they'll shoot to make up for all of their quiet of years. You're not safe here; one bullet, and this kite of yours will hitch on to a star. Where do you keep your whiskey?"

"Yes, Jack." Grace put her hand familiarly on his sleeve; she had not evinced such interest in him since his arrival. He looked at her, trying to discover the reason. She smiled very cordially back at him, as if to confirm some understanding. "Dad says things are really serious," she said, persuasively. "Come. The servants are already leaving, taking sides with the Satsumas and the Chu-Shus. We're in a pretty fix with the cooks gone."

Deering laughed at their earnestness.

"I'm not afraid. I'll hoist the American flag and take a day off."

The Major's large, substantial hand fell heavily on his shoulder. He had located some bottles and was correspondingly genial.

"That is just what you wouldn't dare do," he said, gravely. "Denton says we must not do anything to

destroy our neutrality. How do you know but some of the clans might rush in here, seeing the flag up, and claim protection? It would be a pretty mess. Keep quiet and keep cool. Bullets are not very comfortable friends, but nothing may harm you. By the way, where is that wonderful picture you have? the Mishy-ha-ha-or something like that. These foreign names are hard on the vocal cords."

Deering colored hotly. It seemed sacrilege to show it to any one else.

"I sent it back," he said, hastily. "The frame needed mending."

"I might take one back with me," the Major remarked, testing a second glass from one of the bottles, very analytically. "It would be a souvenir worth having."

"You promised me a mandarin coat," Cousin Em reminded him.

"And me a teakwood chest," Grace pouted.

"That's enough, that's enough," he protested, helpless against so much femininity. Faint, dull as the far distant roll of wheels, a reverberation rang out, making the trim rows of Howo china rattle on their shelves.

"Thunder?" asked Grace, rising to go.

"No, a bomb," the Major replied, laconically. He hastily pushed the two women out, looking back at Deering, who was waving aside their arguments.

"Don't be a fool, Deering. If it is bombardment, your life isn't worth a cent perched on this hill, a target for every missile. Come, my boy."

But Deering shook his head, unconvinced. He drew aside the curtain concealing his treasure, and reached

his hungry arms out towards it in entreaty and longing, after they took their departure.

“My love, my love. What do I care about life—without you? If I am killed, I will be with you, my love.” The futility of his passion mocked him; to be in love at all was a torment of body and mind; but to be in love with a woman who had been dead 200 years, a bit of canvas, was more than absurd. What had bewitched him? He had always been sane, level-headed, rational on all matters; and here he was ranting like a fool before a canvas, the most inanimate object for adoration one could imagine. He was bewitched. The booming was increasing. The path from the hill was a panorama of black moving people, rushing down to safety, like a swarm of curious ants, running to and fro.

Another explosion, loud and crashing, made the frail bamboo supports of the cottage tremble. The Satsuma boy, Fuji, with a white, scared face, darted into the room, and with a frightened apology to Honorable Foreigner, hurried out. He, too, had joined his clan.

Warfare began; bombs rang out, here, there, overhead, beside them. The house swayed. There was a terrific concussion, the clatter of falling china, and with a crash the Hishigawa fell to the floor. Stunned, dazed, Deering stared around. He could have sworn he heard the rustle of a garment. He thought he saw the form of a girl run out into the darkness, the beautiful, never-to-be-forgotten face of the Hishigawa lady. But amid the screams of the frightened natives, and the yells of the clans as they fought their way through the streets, pitting might against might, he calmed himself; for he knew that no one would ever believe such a strange

experience. Slowly, still in a mental cloud, he crept over the floor, and by the aid of a lantern, examined the canvas. There was a big hole in it, as neat as if cut out, and a rent down the painted garment. The face was gone. The Hishigawa had come to life—and he fell down, half insensible, beside it.

Frightened, terrified, as much by the excited cries of the people as by the bombs, which burst over the hill tops behind, Cherry Blossom ran swiftly down the road, past the Green Jade Horse; as far as possible away from the Cherryfield Gate, where the shortest way to Yuri's cottage led. Hawaka would take that road, and while fear had made her anxious over Lily-mother's fate, separated from her as she had been for several weeks, yet her greatest apprehension was because of Hawaka—because of his dreadful threat. She was afraid to think of the punishment he might mete out to her if he found her; but she must reassure herself that Yuri was safe and out of danger.

In her dull green kimono she passed unnoticed in the gloom; her clogs sank lightly into the sand, through the neglected paths where lovers once strayed, and when a lantern shed its effulgence at an unexpected turn, she held her huge sleeve over her head, in the manner of priests when they mix among the worldly on the streets.

It was as well to be cautious; Hawaka might even so be hiding in the neighborhood, waiting for her return. She saw a light in Timi's cottage, and crouching by the clumps of bamboo, slowly crept towards the shoji, which was closed as protection against the disorder on the streets.

"Timi," she breathed softly, her mouth at the shutters. "Timi."

There was no reply, so she took some pebbles and hit them smartly against the frame.

There was no sign that her whispered call had been heard. But some one was coming around the corner of the hut, and Cherry Blossom drew back into the shadows as her heart leapt in dull terror at the thought that it might be Hawaka.

A form jumped toward her in the darkness, grabbing her hands. At that tangible evidence she gave a deep sigh of thankfulness. It was Timi, who could readily be mistaken for a man in the garments she wore.

"It is well you have come back," said Timi, sagely. "I make the great prophecy. We are on the eve of a great disaster. All birth must come through pain and sorrow. The new woman of Japan is soon to be here. There will be a national calamity, old buildings will fall to make way for new ones. Old evils will be wiped out so that beautiful good things can take their place, crowding them out for ever. The new type of women will arise from those ruins, men's equals, men's true helpmates. I tell you, Cherry Blossom, mark Timi's words. There is a big disaster coming. But through it we who escape shall benefit by it, and a new, marvelous city be built on the ruins. My sweetheart, he is a peasant, but what of it? He has as much brain as the mighty men who sit in the Diet. His ideas are listened to by his fellow-men. He writes for the paper my father prints, and such words, to make one think. Some day you will hear him, Cherry Blossom. There can be title for peasants as well as for peers."

Cherry Blossom laughed, unbelieving. It was good to hear Timi's friendly voice, although she could not follow her views.

"Yes, laugh if you like, Cherry Blossom," Timi rebuked her. "Some day you swallow your ridicule of Shihura. He is a peasant and we are proud of it. Watch him. Already the great Satsuma leaders send for him, wanting his ideas to follow. Never before has it happened. But we who think see what is coming. One day the whole world must talk one tongue. That will unlock the secrets of centuries. The great disaster will show our Japan what friends we have, friends who give us help and money when we are in ruins. We have alliances over the water. Have they helped us yet? Will they help us when the big disaster comes? Do not count on them. There will be new friends, perhaps those we have criticised. But they will help. Today, the great Empress invited me to show our girls in school here how to march. They must wear loose clothing so they can move easily. Timi will be head of an army yet, you shall see."

But her audience had disappeared, seeking Yuri, whom she burned with impatience to see. Timi followed to protect her until she saw her and Yuri reunited, and then stole back home.

There was much money, a little bag of many yen, to pour into Yuri's hands, and Cherry Blossom would take her in a rickshaw to the Hyakka-yen, the Garden of 100 Flowers, to see the wonderful rainbow of growing fragrance, and hear the uguis, the nightingale, sing. But Yuri gave no heed to her merry talk; nor did the money interest her. She only knew that her blossom had come

back, and that was enough, for she had missed her sorely and Osaka had informed her that he did not know where she had disappeared; for, fearing Hawaka's search, Cherry Blossom had succeeded in impressing him with the necessity of caution, and he could not discriminate in giving out information.

There was little time for rejoicing. They must be leaving for good, before Hawaka returned, toward dawn, as was his habit, after a night at gaming. They must take all the clothes they would need. Chu-Chu was already planning to go to the home of her aged sister, near the rice fields, for now that her hands were not so deft as in younger years, she still had her legs, and they were very useful for water ridges.

In tearful happiness, they busied themselves in haste, embracing every few minutes, then separating to other duties.

Then Chu-Chu, forgetting her sullenness at sight of the girl's radiant face, offered to dress their hair, and while she was rubbing Cherry Blossom's lustrous bronze strands, Yuri brought out the box that contained the little white bride's clothes. She looked at Cherry Blossom, her small brown face solemn and dejected. There was no time for mourning; every minute counted.

"Sakura," she said very tenderly. "To-night, you go way off from Yuri. You go back to your people. I have promised the honorable law men, who came again, and I told them truth this time. You have honorable father, already here, a nice fat man, they say, a Major man. He loves you very much because he loved his little white bride. And you her child."

"I—go away? Leave my Yuri? No, no," cried Cherry Blossom wildly, jumping to her feet and upsetting Chu-Chu's elaborate basket, full of pins and camellia oils. "Never that, Yuri. You are the only mother I know, dear Yuri. I never leave you."

Yuri embraced her affectionately, striving for self-control. Then she gently pushed her down on the cushion so Chu-Chu could resume her labor.

"It is better so, Sakura," she said calmly. "And it is safer. Hawaka may harm you. With your people, there is less danger—perhaps none. Your honorable father a big man. See, I have his name here. A Major man mean very much." She drew out from a little pocket, pinned within her kimono, a bit of pasteboard, but Cherry repulsed it, crying bitterly. She did not want to go. She looked around the tiny cottage with deep affection. It was the only home she had ever known and she was fond of it. And Yuri. She sobbed unrestrainedly, while Chu-Chu gave her frequent admonishment by jerking her hair, for she had yet another coiffure to arrange, and her feet ached.

Yuri's package dropped to the floor. A knife, small, nevertheless dangerous in its narrow blade, fell out with the card. She did not notice the latter, but quickly grabbed the knife and replaced it in her bosom. One could never tell. Sometimes, in trouble, a friend could not do more; and the work was swift—and noiseless.

"See, I dress you in little white bride's clothes; so, like her, you go back to your honorable father, Sakura." She held them up, the old-fashioned dress with its narrow waist, the full skirt gaily flounced, and the little flat hat wreathed, pathetically, with forget-me-nots.

Yuri pressed them to her lips, murmuring a broken prayer to her gods.

"Poor little white bride," she said, reverentially.

Cherry Blossom dried her tears; the coiffure was finished. Her cheeks were scarlet, her breathing irregular. The sight of the clothes, so different from the kimono she had been accustomed to, struck a strange chord within her. She was a white girl. She was not Japanese. She was of the same race as Deering, and at the thought of him, his handsome face, his tender daily adoration of her, her heart gave a jump, making her dizzy with feeling. She loved him—very much.

Her abrupt change of mind seemed to surprise even Yuri, but she made no comment, and after she had approved of the lacquer Chu-Chu smeared over her own head, enough to keep it in place a week at least, she helped the girl into the queer garments, and fastened the little hat on top of her looped hair. It was not exactly pretty, according to any standards, foreign, or fashionable, or even modern; but neither of them was aware of it. To them it was classed among many other ridiculous customs that the honorable foreigners displayed and endeavored to practise in their country, and whether it was flounces or card playing it mattered little.

They were ready. Yuri was to take Cherry Blossom to her new home, and remain with her for a while perhaps—if the honorable Major father would permit it.

They embraced again, with a parting regret at leaving the little home, and even Chu-Chu joined in their weeping this time.

A noise sounded on the porch in front, beyond the closed shoji; there was a shove, a sudden current of

night air as the blinds shot up, leaving the way free, and Hawaka, his ugly face baleful with anger, his eyes evil, stepped in.

Yuri stifled a scream of terror. She knew the fate that threatened Cherry Blossom, and as she saw two men, sinister looking and crafty, behind him, she gave up hope. Custom and traditions had given her a certain stoicism, and her face expressed none of the anguish she was enduring. Hawaka roughly caught Cherry Blossom by the arm, shaking her as a rebuke for having hidden herself. Now, he could laugh, for tears would help very little. He whirled her about, for exhibition.

"Here she is, Honorable Sirs. Did not Hawaka say truth? She has lots of pretty about her—white, strong teeth, nice long arms, and a nice fat cheek. Hawaka never lie. I told you I would get her for you, and I keep my word."

The two grotesque men, in blue flapping coats and flat hats, walked slowly around Cherry Blossom, appraising her charms, scanning her skin, fingering the silk flounces, and raising the long skirt to inspect her little feet. Business must be conducted on a different basis when one is not selling wares; and selling a woman is just as shrewd an operation as selling a horse, for one can be just as badly deceived.

"Tonight, now, you shall have her," Hawaka went on grandly. "She cost you fifty yen every month. I say nothing about what I owe you—she work it out. This girl be fine girl for Yoshiwara."

Cherry Blossom struck her small fists out at them, with an agonized scream, beating against them helplessly, weakly, in despair. But Hawaka's large, powerful

hand pinched her throat by way of warning, and he laughed with insolence at her anguish.

"See, she make a pretty noise, too?" he cried, brutally.

Yuri, cowed into immovability, watched the proceedings, making no further outcry; there was no need to cry for help, for here in this remote road, there was no one to hear. And if so, by chance, the voice rang out, it would be confused with the yells of the fighters on the streets.

The agents of the Yoshiwara counted out Hawaka's money with precision, commercially estimating the girl's pretension as they did. Then they took some heavy ropes they had brought with them and tied her hands behind her back. There was a proverb among them to the effect that where women were concerned, the eye must rest on the possession; and even if she bore one seven sons, not to trust her. For that reason, they made the knots very secure around Cherry Blossom's delicate wrists, lacerating the sensitive flesh. Yuri was a different consideration. More than once she tried to appeal to Hawaka's better nature. She was his mother, after all, but he looked away, and once, approaching where she was crouching by the wall, he insolently hit out against her with the toe of his clog. That conveyed a much greater affront than any of his epithets, which he had not spared her.

Women of her age counted for nothing where they were going to take her; but there was always work to do, plenty of it, and she might be useful in menial tasks, and assist the men in shoveling sand over the roads.

They were each valuable for different reasons, but the ropes that bound them tight together were the same; and made into one bundle practically, they were half-dragged, kicked into the covered cast that stood outside, and drawn with two man power up the Cherryfield road, resembling, as they wished it to, the wooden vehicles the truck farmers use when they convey the harvest to the city.

Behind, trudged Hawaka, smiling grimly to himself as he made plans for the enjoyment of his earnings.

Now he could dictate to Matsuki. He had beaten him at his own game, for it was for the possession of Cherry Blossom the hideous old Mongolian had always played, and not for money; and there was no preference allowed any one in the Yoshiwara.

CHAPTER XII

IN VAIN did Fuji place his favorite dishes before his master, and concoct unique combinations out of tender bamboo shoots and lily bulbs; or pound the early chrysanthemum buds into delectable relishes, but these savories returned untouched. The rose-colored ginger, grotesquely shaped—even the highest form of culinary art, a live fish, whose fate it was to be eaten alive—all failed to tempt.

The Satsuma was in despair; he pored over his lessons, hoping to discover a cause; sometimes one learned much in a book.

He was deeply sorry for his lord. In his blunt understanding he could only show his sympathy one way, by his customary epistle. It was very polite, and was merely another proof of how invaluable his services were—so he could ask for a raise. For he had promised a priest several sen if he would help him with his prayers for the Imperial Ancestor shrine. He copied the words from the book very carefully, for one must give particular attention to beautiful expressions, and although he did not know what any of them meant, they were quite large, and surely that implied that they represented important things.

He added a few suggestions of his own, for effect, then read it over to himself in sibilant whispers, before

tossing it over the screen—a habit he had adopted while his master rested.

Honorable Mr. Foreigner Dearing:

Dear Sir: We have been successful in procuring a load of horses, as per your order of the 2nd inst., and they will be shipped next Monday. I trust they will reach you in good condition & prove satisfactory.

Fuji sends his compliments & on the 15 will send some honorable offerings at the Matsuri for his head to get well. He Fuji would like to be raised very high & hopes Honorable Mr. Foreigner Dearing can do it. He is very wicked for asking & knows he is a black swine, & hoping you are the same,

FUJI.

He cleared his throat, undecided whether to read it or to throw it. But discretion advised this latter form for intrusion, and raising his arm in a circle, he let it fall over the top, where he knew the honorable head of his master rested on the American bed.

Deering was awakened from his doze by the contact; it did not tend to make his reception of it cordial; he read it silently, making no comment. The lad's erudition deserved some encouragement, and if he must write letters instead of exercising his tongue, he would see to it that a very modern manual for that purpose was bestowed on him. For he had very little interest at the present in equine matters, and it was unfair to rob him of the infrequent slumber he got by such considerations.

He acknowledged himself mentally and bodily ill. It was not altogether the continued strain of the heat; he could not deceive himself into attributing his inertia to climatic exhaustion. The torn canvas of the Hishigawa lay where he had placed it against the wall, on that memorable occasion when it fell. Linking bit by bit fragmentary recollections, he had gradually come to the conclusion that perhaps the huge frame had first struck him, and therefore his delusion about the beautiful girl coming to life had been the result of the accident. Business duties were not sufficiently pressing to require his presence at his offices, and a few days of indolence would not affect matters, especially as people were still sojourning in the hills, and a general vacation was being indulged in, except by the foreign embassies, that had deemed it wise to remain in the Imperial city, in case of emergency.

For while the Chu-Shus and the Satsumas had somewhat stilled their warfare, conducted for the most part with fistic encounters and the occasional pyrotechnical display of ammunition, trouble had not actually begun, and by temporizing, it was evident that weightier plans were being formulated.

Fuji had blandly suggested to him to make the Japanese doctor return his money for not keeping his head well, for is not one's physician paid only to prevent disease, and if one falls ill he loses money by it instead of obtaining more? But Deering had not taken advantage of this custom, and rejected the thought, advanced by the best of intentions. It was his loss that affected him; his ancient painting was destroyed, and he had been very fond of it.

As Fuji prepared his honorable bath, with the water much hotter than usual in mistaken kindness, the way his own race liked it, so that the skin was almost par-boiled in the process, making a torture out of a daily pleasure, he examined the picture very solemnly, familiar with the legends in connection with the great Hishigawa Kichibei's work. It is true, the chaffinch had left a much smaller hole, but is it not a bird? And a woman's head is many times bigger. There need be no further sickness because of that; he knew a man who might repair it, good as new, and if he forgot to see about it within the very next hour, he hoped the great god Buddha would singe his eyebrows.

It was very still in the little cottage. Deering wondered at the air of quiet around Edwards' cottage, too, a step or so beyond. No longer had he heard the unmusical picking of the samisen, or the thin little treble raised in singing:

Come, let us dance the Dance of the Honorable
Garden,
Chan, Chan,
Cha, Cha, Yoitomosé,
Yoitomosé,
Chan, Chan, Chan.

Come, let us dance the Dance of the Honorable
Garden,

Who cuts the bamboo at the back of the house,
My sweet lord's own bamboo—the first he planted.

He wondered if any one were ill. He had absented himself lately from all friends; first, deeply engrossed in his picture, so that he disliked passing any time away from his adoration of it more than was necessary. And

after his first evasions, Edwards had refrained from making attempts to see him. Solitude, indefinitely, did not comfort him; he experienced a very distinct desire for companionship, and decided to see if his friend were at home; and taking his pipe, walked over on the soft gravel.

It struck him oppressively that the house was apparently deserted. The shoji was half-open, to admit of ventilation, and glancing in, he remarked its painstaking, bare atmosphere. Flower Garden was a conscientious worker. He turned to go, sauntering idly, not overly anxious to continue his lonely siesta in his own bamboo house. Edwards was coming. Deering stopped, dismayed, shocked at sight of his face. Great rings of suffering lay under his eyes; his face was colorless, drawn.

"Good heavens, man, what's the trouble?" He grasped his hand, holding it.

Edwards motioned him in, and throwing off his hat, tossed a cushion on the floor, and in native style sat on it.

"Flower Garden is gone," he announced briefly. "Gone—without a trace, a line. Gone."

"What's happened? She seemed content enough." Deering had dropped his pipe from his mouth in astonishment. That explained why he had heard no singing. He looked involuntarily toward the corner; the little samisen was still there, as he had noticed it that day, with one string broken. Perhaps she had heard them as they talked, and he tried to recall what they had been discussing. He remembered some allusions he had made to Edwards' old love, but he rejected the idea as being

absurd, for even if Flower Garden had heard them, it was not at all probable she could understand it. But the mute evidence of the broken samisen impressed him forcibly. It showed she had not touched the instrument since.

"Then she did love you, after all." Deering picked up his pipe again and filled it anew.

"She would have stayed if she loved me," Edwards said dully. "And do you know, Jack, I never knew before how much I cared for her. I suppose it was nothing but companionship back of it, but unconsciously she grew into my life, with her quiet, unobtrusive, gentle little ways, eager to please, self-sacrificing. If I knew where she was, I'd feel better about it. Perhaps my conscience hurts a bit, too. I did not treat her right, perhaps. Girls here boast they are "heart easy," *kokoro yasui* meaning they have no other lovers. She was so tender-hearted, always going to the Matsuri or festivals of the Jizo, and hanging her strings of paper prayers on the trees so that some day she would find a little baby on the door step. Three times a month, regularly, like one possessed, did she attend the festival, with her little offerings, to gain the goodwill of the great Jizo. Poor little Flower Garden. Deering, I—I'm afraid I've been a brute to her." He put his head on his arm, in bitter self-reproach.

"Nonsense, old man; you've done everything you could. I don't see that there's a thing you can reproach yourself for. Have you tried to find her?"

Edwards looked up, his hair was disheveled, giving him an unnatural expression; he had not shaved, and his face looked bluish with the finely growing beard.

"Find her? That's the whole trouble, Jack. I am white; she is Japanese. I have no right to keep her, the arrangement being what it was. And not one of these native officials could help me—and I couldn't ask the assistance of my own people in a case of this kind, you see. Poor little child."

Deering smoked in gloomy silence, convinced of his friend's opinion. East may be West, but the line is indefinably drawn, and exists.

"I've got it," he cried suddenly, putting his pipe away. "It's the honorable mother-in-law. I'll wager she's back of the whole thing. She's had a chance to get more money for her." Their eyes met, in expressive understanding.

"It doesn't seem probable," Edwards said, slowly, yet dwelling on the possibilities of the idea. "I gave her more than any one else. There'd be only one other place."

"What is that?"

"The Yoshiwara."

"Good God!" Deering exclaimed, jumping to his feet.

"I guess that's it," Edwards went on, recalling incidents to support his belief. "There were other sisters there, some of those you refused to be tempted by, with the pretty names—Butterfly, White Bird, Climbing Rose."

"It's a shame; it's a crime. The law should interfere," Deering cried, his face blazing with indignation, "and the mother should be punished for doing it."

Edwards shook his head, making a little gesture of submission.

"It is the custom here," he said. "You must remember that girls lost no caste because of it, and certain classes resort to it to keep up the family resources. That is the end. I told you that soon it would all be a memory, but little did I suspect it would happen so soon, so unexpectedly."

Deering took a step and put his hand affectionately on the other's shoulder.

"Edwards, I'm sorry it hurts, but I'm glad the thing is over—glad for your sake and Anne Manners. You can turn these pages over; the new page is clean."

Edwards pressed his hand, comprehending his sympathy.

Out on the gravel the sound of clogs made a noise; steps came up on the porch; there was a deferential beating on the shoji, and even without waiting for a reply, Fuji rushed in, out of breath, his eyes bulging with grief.

"Honorable Mr. Foreigners! Honorable Mr. Foreigners!" he could only stammer, and they waited for him to control his agitation. "You see, Fuji went to the picture man's as he promised, so that Buddha would not singe his eyebrows; and there on the street, as he turned the corner, with her little hands full of the rice cakes she wanted to give the great god Jizo, they found her, smiling, gone. And her old black-pig mother, what did she care except that she did not get the three yen she was to have for her at the Yoshiwara. But rather would the girl die. Oh, Honorable Foreigners, the great Jizo was going to smile on her soon, they said, as they carried her away. Perhaps in Nirvana, he smile on her, even yet."

"Who was it, Fuji? Speak?" Deering cried, sternly.

"It was Flower Garden, Honorable Mr. Foreigner; there she was, smiling so peaceful. She would not go where honorable mother said. She has gone with the great gods, forever."

They sat in the twilight, speechless, and one by one the brilliant eyes of the streets below them came out, glimmering and radiating, red, blue, green, like beacons shining from afar.

Deering arose, moved to sudden pity. He put his arm sympathetically around his friend, as he stooped forward, his hand supporting his head, bitter from his self-flagellation, crushed with grief.

"And you said they had no souls," Deering said, gently. "She loved you. That was it."

He moved out in the soft grey vapors of the night, much disturbed, the mellow tones of the temple bells reaching him, sounding as a reverent benediction to the day's irritations.

"Namu Amida Butsu," came the subdued undertone, the hum of many supplicants, not far off from where he stood. The clouds of incense, odorous, symbolic, floated through the night air. They were worshipping the Great Lord Buddha, praying for safe journey to Nirvana, imploring protection for their dead ancestors.

"Poor little Flower Garden." He bowed his head, as the temple bells rang out again.

And faint on the breeze came the response—

"Namu Amida Butsu."

CHAPTER XIII

CHU-CHU, stealthily observing all that transpired from behind a screen in the adjoining room, and whose presence was unnoticed by Hawaka, had been taught prudence. She kept very quiet until the frightened women had been taken away. There was not room in the cart for Hawaka, but he followed behind in the darkness, to see that they were delivered in safety.

Once assured of his being gone, she stepped noiselessly out, and searched for the bit of pasteboard Yuri had dropped when her knife had fallen. She picked it up, unable to read it. She must go there, at once; there was no time to be lost. She could not travel, either, as rapidly as other people, because her body was very fat. Not stopping to change her kimono, she snapped the shoji in place so that the marauding dogs could not enter in her absence, and walked as fast as she could down the road.

It was seldom that a rickshaw appeared on the road leading to the truck farms. It was a very lowly place, where people never rode except for the most urgent business. She had small hope of having a friendly lift, and her body was a heavy load for her feet. But her honorable madame had had a samurai grandfather; it was more duty than inclination that spurred her on,

and she knew anyway that she would be rewarded by the gods, for duty is inexorable.

Yet, as accidents often arise, there was a rickshaw even so coming down the road toward her; it could not be Hawaka yet, so she had no fear. In the glow of the lantern she caught sight of one of the Honorable Foreigners who had called to see Yuri in regard to the white lady's child, and she sprang joyfully toward the vehicle in the dark, much to the discomfiture of the coolie, and greatly to his grief; for she landed with all of her weight on one of his feet. While he stopped to rub it, in intense pain, she took advantage of the pause to speak to the Honorable Foreigner. Breathlessly, she poured out her fears, and the danger. The cart that contained the two women was of old structure, and wooden. There was nothing swifter than a rickshaw, light of wheel like a bird on wing. Honorable Foreigner would at once overtake them, up the Cherryfield road.

The Honorable law-man had been on his way to Yuri's, unable to understand why she had not produced Cherry Blossom, as she had promised, and he had small faith in the native's pledges. But this assumed a different aspect, and he had his coolie whirl around, in spite of his crushed toe, and run as fast as he could to overtake Hawaka and his victims.

The crowded streets, as they proceeded toward the Ginza, made it all the better for the pursuit, for it compelled the wooden cart to stop often; but then would Hawaka thrust his long hand within, and grab the two women, trying every means to punish them for retarding the culmination of his plans for so long. He had his

revenge now. There would be no more laughter for a while.

Yuri, concealed by the friendly darkness under the hood of the cart, writhed, wriggling her tiny frame, until slowly she found, with a great sob of thankfulness, that she could free one hand. She felt of her bosom. Her precious knife was safe.

She looked out at the crowded streets, insensate with sorrow; the twinkling lanterns, the tempting open yomisé or stalls, all had lost their attraction. There was not the slightest chance of an escape, with Hawaka stalking behind, guarding his precious burden, determined to see them safely where he had planned.

She loved Cherry Blossom. She loved every girlish curve of her face, the soft caress of her arms, her soft voice. She shed hot, burning tears in the dark, as she kissed her over and over. She should never go to the Yoshiwara. If there is no hope, there is always an end.

Sometimes a knife is the best friend—when there is the Yoshiwara. In the dark it would be noiseless, cheating Hawaka of both of them, for she would take the long journey with her, too.

All around them people surged through the streets, merry, enjoying the night raiment of the shops, uttering prayers to the great gods above, and the tiny "Flower-treasures of Nippon," groups of children, permitted always to see the gleaming red and green and orange lanterns at night, safe under a parent's guidance, shouted lustily on all sides:

"Bandi, Bandi. Four million years of happiness. Four million years of happiness."

Yuri moaned over her grief, wondering why the gods had punished her, as the cart clattered along the road. Sometimes the clang of a tram, along another thoroughfare, mingled in with the temple bells, or the cries of the yellow-and-blue-clad bird dealers, with their chirping, feathered assortment, songless; for here the nightingale is the only singing bird—and the flower pedlar's monotonous:

“H-asu-no-hana! Flowers to sell!”

Yuri bit her lips, her sharp little teeth making the blood come. She loved Cherry Blossom with all her existence. It must happen soon; they would soon be approaching the Great Omon, the Thunder Gate, that led in. It must all be over by then. But her hand trembled so that she almost dropped her knife, her teeth chattered as if from a chill, and the girl drew closer toward her, in affection.

“O hear me, good lord Buddha,” her dry lips moaned, as they turned the last corner. She shut her eyes, unwilling.

The blackness of despair, of bitter anguish, numbed her. No longer could she see; the veins of her forehead throbbed unsteadily; her head buzzed with mysterious rushing noises, suffocating her, terrorizing her. She clutched the handle with savage determination, goaded into a demoniacal strength by fleeting disgusting recollections of the Yoshiwara, its pitiless degradations, its furnace of lust where vice burnt deep into the soul, scorching it, branding it with its hideous, loathsome mark—never to forget—tortured always by memory.

She raised her hand to strike.

There was a loud crash that sent their cart spinning sideways; with a hoarse, savage cry, a big, powerful, half-naked coolie sprang on the leg-men in the traces, and with a blow of his mighty fist, sent them sprawling and unconscious on the ground. It was all done in the twinkling of an eye, the triumph of brutality, and with the unerring swiftness of a judgment from on high.

Amid the frightened cries of the two women, clinging to each other, sobbing and laughing hysterically at their unbelievable escape, the occupant of the rickshaw had jumped out and was pressing a cold piece of steel very persuasively against Hawaka's head, and marshaling him to the nearest shop to summon the police. Under the lapel of his coat gleamed a badge recognized by the Imperial government.

Hawaka was under arrest.

An official of the Imperial government, with an important-looking document in his hand, had seized him, and ordered two officers to guard him. There appeared to be damaging evidence against him, and to confirm it a replica of his picture showed on the white paper, apprising the police of his crimes. Were evidence of the charge of smuggling opium found on Hawaka, the law was to be congratulated for its vigilance in securing a dangerous violator.

The official, realizing the feeble foundation for his hopes, looked his culprit over, in the futile hope of establishing some clue to a discovery. But Hawaka was too much the clever criminal to have overlooked the possibility of a search of his clothes.

"Take off your shoes," the official ordered him, peremptorily, and the tone employed brought immediate obedience. But again was disappointment depicted on the Honorable Law-man's countenance. He deliberated in silence, unwilling to acknowledge defeat, thinking of other probable secret hiding places, but in turn rejecting each. The shoes were like all other clogs, supported by two upright pieces of wood, to hold them off the ground. The soles were thick. Indeed, the soles were very thick. He took his cane and with the tip poked at the bottom; then, with the blade of his knife he cut through the sides, revealing a wadding of innumerable tiny tissue paper packages. The soles were peculiarly thick; they concealed several thousand dollars worth of opium.

He had his evidence. He grabbed Hawaka by the nape of the neck, ordering him summarily to put his clogs on, and bade the two officials secure his wrists as he finished.

"My man," he said with meaning, as Hawaka raised his eyes in dull terror; "I've got you this time."

CHAPTER XIV

THE Oriental nature is peculiarly emotional, and trivialities are more often tragedies with them than gigantic perplexities. Transported from abject fear to joy at their miraculous deliverance, Yuri was quite positive that they were none the worse for their experience and could proceed to their destination. And gratitude made her especially eager to carry out her promise to the Honorable Law-man, and see that the Major's daughter should arrive in safety. For who could tell?—Hawaka had not enough intelligence to plan his nefarious schemes alone; a worse fate might threaten them tomorrow.

The rickshaw drawn by the gigantic coolie was large enough to hold both of them, and under the assurance of the law-man of their expected advent, and their welcome, they began to look forward with much anticipation to what they had dreaded before.

It was a confused happy memory afterwards—the quick ride along the streets, the approach to the big, elegant house where the pretty colored flag floated; stopping at the wide, open door, so different from the shoji they were accustomed to. A native servant had come forward, at first with a look of consternation, but it is not polite to question; and when Yuri had displayed the card the law-man had given her again as he put them

in the one rickshaw, anxious to have them proceed in safety, the servant bowed very politely, so that his black head almost touched the floor. For the Major's name was written on it.

Yuri straightened Cherry Blossom's hat as they waited alone in one of the big rooms. It had several mirrors in it, and while it is not polite to regard one's self in them, there are occasions when excuses can be made. Their recent fright, and tears, had left slight impression except perhaps on the eyes, but under a shaded light one does not notice the color of the moth's wings; so reasoned Yuri, as she dabbed Cherry Blossom's face with her handkerchief. She withdrew into the shadows, out of sight, as she heard some one coming. Cherry Blossom sat under the glare of the big orange chandelier, a strange-looking little figure in her old-fashioned dress with the flounces, and the tiny hat with its wreath of forget-me-nots.

A stout, red-faced man, middle-aged, took a step in, and with an exclamation of amazement, drew back.

"My God, Edith!" He rubbed his hands across his eyes, in a confused memory. He tottered unsteadily to a chair, afraid to touch her, as one in a dream. There *she* was, as on that last bitter day, those years long past—eighteen years—when she ran away from him, after their foolish lovers' quarrel; the same skirt with the flounces, the same little round hat with the wreath of forget-me-nots. Eighteen years. He had not forgotten, and it was her favorite flower.

The Major got up, still uncertain on his feet, for the shock had been great and he was unprepared for it, the startling resemblance, and the sight of the garments she

had worn He went up to Cherry Blossom, and put a hand on each side of her face, and kissed her.

"My dear child" he said, wiping his eyes. He sat beside her, struggling for composure. She was his, theirs, his long lost little bride's, and his. He could not talk, but he patted her hand, too much moved for speech. It had carried him back to the one romance he had ever had and the long unceasing search he had had, ever since His little girl— and hers But it did not take long to adjust himself to his

newly acquired responsibility, and to be a father gave him a genuine pleasure, although he confessed to a selfish consideration of his own desires for years. But there are some pleasures that are doubled by sharing, and so he came to regard Cherry Blossom. He had taken her to his heart as a matter of course; but Yuri he had merely accepted because for the present she was a necessity, in looking after his daughter's needs.

Then began many visits under Mrs. Denton's direction and she could indulge in all of her mania for shopping that she wished; for a suitable wardrobe must be provided, enough to last for their stay, for the Major was making elaborate plans, and had mentally limited his sojourn, seeing his quest so happily terminated.

"Who would ever suspect he carried such a romance within him?" asked Grace, discussing it one evening, at one of the early gatherings at the embassy; for the diplomatic crowd had been increased by new advents, and people were returning from their summer stay at the Hot Baths and Sun-Brightness in the hills.

Once a week the Dentons revived the custom of throwing open their doors for callers, "American Nights" as

it had been facetiously called; and this gave opportunity for greater social intercourse among the enforced residents. Grace, arranging the folds of her evening gown, a filmy tulle construction, drew her head sidewise, to catch the effect in a mirror, a pin in her mouth. "If only middle-aged men could be thin, and not bald, I'd admire them more" She continued.

"I've always found the Mayor most interesting," Cousin Em retorted in defence; she wore an aigrette in her head and it shook menacingly as she spoke. "He has never agreed with me on a single subject. It is most interesting; for I don't always like to know what every body is going to do. It's too much like machine work. I prefer hand work. And it's like bridge, too. If every hand were the same, how dreadfully tiresome it would be. Man, any way, is merely one of nature's agreeable blunders."

"You always stand up for him." Grace put in caustically.

"I wouldn't mind standing up with him," Cousin Em retorted. "When one gets as old as I, she prefers substantial things—like the Major. It's just as Emerson says: Man is an animal; but he is the only one that can laugh, drink when he is not thirsty, —and make love the year round . . . Are you ready? I see that guests have already begun to arrive, and we promised your mother we would stand in the receiving line to-night"

"In a minute I'm getting tired of this unsettled love affair of the Imperial Prince. Why can't they settle it, the Chu-Shus and the Satsumas? It is so annoying, breaking out afresh every now and then, like a mock

battle and Great Heavens, Cousin Em
Look at that procession coming in now. I do believe
there's a Cook party in Did you ever see so
many women and with spectacles? I hope we don't have
to put them up for the night. If the Clans go on fighting
. . . . The library has ten extra cots in it now"

They hurried out, with an odorous flutter of tulle and silk, their light laughter echoing after them. A hand, small, brown, timidly drew the thick portières aside, and a head peeped in. It was Yuri. Her sleek black hair was unbecomingly arranged in a coil and the latest waving, and she was resplendent in a heavy, ugly, though expensive beaded gown. She noticed for some one to follow.

Cherry Blossom stepped in, conscious of her first high heels. A wonderful gown of silver gauze, low cut, exquisite, made an effective setting for her beauty; if she had possessed attractiveness before, in the prim though picturesque lines of the kimono, the most critical would have to concede that the modern art became her more. She radiated loveliness, and with childish pride, stole several satisfying glances at herself, in the glass. It did not seem possible it was herself, Cherry Blossom; and the admiration she felt at looking at the reflection was what she would have given to an utter stranger in her place; in fact, she felt like one. "How you like it, Yuri? How you like it? See? Mees Grace, she say I all dressed up. But I not. I am dressed down. It is very low, at the top. And very high at the bottom. Perhaps Mees Grace mean I am dressed up at the bottom. The English is so funny"

She opened and shut an expensive rose-pink feather fan, lost in admiration of it, like a child with a new toy. Yuri gave guttural, half-audible cries of rapture, in praise.

"My pretty white lady girl . . . my pretty white lady girl" She patted the glittering dress with reverence.

There was the odor of a cigar; the heavy inflections of masculine voices. The Major, red of face and very ill at ease in his dress suit on such a close night, entered, the Ambassador beside him. His face lighted up at sight of his daughter, a half sad, half whimsical expression flitting over it, conjuring lost dreams of his youth.

"My God you look like your mother to-night, Cherry," he ejaculated, feebly. "It is disturbing, Denton—Damned disturbing, after all these years."

"Cherry—it's a pretty name for her," The Ambassador said, with a paternal tone. "Like the flower she is"

The Major drew his daughter fondly to him; his unfamiliar caresses at first embarrassed her, but the power of blood had asserted itself, and she was beginning to take filial liberties with him, patting his large fleshy hands; caressing the bald spot on his head. They were going to be great friends. The presence of Yuri was not so agreeable to the Major; for she jabbered in the jargon he hated and he always felt that she was condemning him for taking his daughter away from her.

"She was called Sakurado," the Major explained, pedantically. "That means cherry blossom, I am told. I'll have her christened when we get home, perhaps her mother's name, Edith. I think she would have liked .

that; I've a feeling she knows I've found our girl—after all these years—Life has some pretty tough situations, eh, Denton. It's good that time has a way of dulling the edge of things”

“Yes, yes,” the Amassador replied absently; he must take up his stand in the reception room. He nodded a friendly smile, moving off. Cherry Blossom stroked the Major's red mottled cheek with little lingering touches; the tinge of sadness on his rubicund face hurt her. “What you Americans say? . . . Dad?” she asked very gently. “Funny name But Mees Grace says it to her Ambassador father, too Dad Dear Dad” He leaned toward her suddenly and kissed her soft girlish cheek; he felt an odd moisture in his eyes, and he drew out his handkerchief, and vigorously blew his nose.

“You looked just like your poor mother then,” he said, his voice husky. He went out to the drawing room, proud of every admiring look in her direction, hearing the whispered romance of his youth on all sides, and found a sequestered retreat behind some tubs of palms, large tropical trunks that had been the especial admiration of the family, as practically they made a wall as defensible as one of mortar. He drew Cherry down beside him on the small divan.

Already the numerous rooms were filled, familiar faces and strangers finding their way under the hospitable roof, conscious of their welcome. It was true, as Grace had hinted; there was some large tourist party present, many of them in their traveling attire, but it made little comment in the cosmopolitan crowd.

Deering was among the last to arrive. He had not regarded the drawing room, so early in the season after the severely hot summer, with any anticipation of pleasure; for his heart was sore within him; and, sharing in Edward's grief had made him averse to seeking company. However, a potent desire to escape his dismal environment had actuated him into presenting himself, more than any thing else, and he passed "down the line," greeting those whom he knew, rushed politely into empty introductions to those he did not know, and finally found himself at the end, opposite the Major's retreat of palms.

He grasped his outstretched hand cordially. A girl was seated beside him, looking down, shutting and opening nervously a large pink fan. He stared at her, mentally groping

"My daughter" said the Major proudly, waving a fat hand in her direction. Cherry Blossom's heart gave a great jump of joy and gladness at sight of him. Her hands trembled so that she moved her fan very rapidly. He would recognize her; it was a moment of terrible suspense, and she was frightened at the realization of her deception. In her American clothes perhaps he would be unable to detect any resemblance. She slowly raised her radiant purple eyes, and looked at him. Deering had a confused recollection of the beautiful droop of the Hishigawa lady's eyes as she looked down; he had almost prayed that by some miracle she would raise them and let him see them. And for one foolish, incoherent moment the memory flashed over him, leaving him standing there gaping at her, like some awkward clown.

She looked up; the Hishigawa lady looked down, yet he recognized a baffling resemblance between the two.

"Oh, Jack You here?" Grace swept in from the outer room, from the midst of a swarm of black coats, where she had presided over the punch bowl. He took her outstretched hand, hardly aware of what he was doing; but all the time he noticed every movement of the Major's beautiful daughter, as she raised her great rose-pink fan and alternately shut off her exquisite face from his view.

He must be ill, suffering from the incipient advances of some terrible physical breakdown. He had heard of strange maladies that afflicted those not acclimated in this country. Why should his blood run hot then cold as he looked at this girl, at their first meeting? Was it the spell of Dai Nippon, the excuse resorted to, to condone frailties that would not be permitted elsewhere? He shook off his confusion with an effort; people would be laughing at him if he continued making such a fool of himself.

He did not hear a word of what Grace was saying; the piazzas had been cleared for dancing; an American band was indefatigably playing Hawaiian music out in the garden near the Shinto Temple, just far enough away to be melodious, and as he stepped into a waltz with Grace, gliding by the Major, his eyes were drawn irresistibly to the girl beside him.

Cousin Em, disengaging herself from an insipid admirer who marcelled his hair, sank breathlessly into a chair beside them; her patent leather pumps hurt her feet, and thankful of the Major's nearsightedness, she

kicked them off under her chair. The Major's simplicity of manner, his unpretentiousness, made a strong appeal to her consideration. He would be a very comfortable personage to go through the ordeal of the breakfast table with, as she termed it; it was hard in matrimony to live up to a star. She much preferred to attach her proverbial wagon to a good substantial lump of clay, without the possible danger of flying through space and alighting on another bit of protoplasm just as uncomfortable. She was already developing a very maternal fondness for Cherry, and there was very little discrepancy between the Major's age and hers.

"We'll have to teach you the waltz steps," she leaned over the girl to say.

"Steps?" Cherry Blossom frowned over the word, not understanding. "I can climb them already—up and down."

"Not that kind," Cousin Em explained, without smiling; she was such an innocent with her naïve way of speaking that one could not make mirth of her speech. "Watch Miss Grace. See. That's the fox trot. It is very easy. Tomorrow I'll show you."

Cherry Blossom cast a brief glance at the couple. Deering's arm was necessarily around his partner, in the customary position.

"No," she shook her head decisively. "I will not learn Mr. Fox Trot. I do not like him. In Japan we never let men put their arms around us, so, until we are married. We dance alone; it is just as comfortable. We dance the Dance of the Honorable Garden. It is very good."

"But you are an American, my darling," the Major stroked her hand in affection. Cherry Blossom's mouth twitched convulsively. She had never been so miserable in all of her life as now, at sight of Deering holding Grace in his arms, as they danced by. Two tears rolled slowly down her cheeks and splashed on her fan. "I hate the Mr. Fox Trot," she quavered, in hostility.

"There, there; you don't have to learn it, pet," her father soothed her.

"O, you are so delicious." Cousin Em caught her hand impulsively. "Major, I'm so envious of you I don't know what to do." She turned to him. "In all my life I have never had a thing to love that I wanted. And why you should have all the luck, and I none, I don't understand."

"I might share it," the Major smiled at her quizzically.

"You know I smoke cigarettes," she reminded him with a wicked smile.

"It may affect your nerves but it hasn't hurt your heart," he said, warmly. "You know, when a man gets to be as old as I, he prefers slippers to shoes, and his friends accordingly. I believe you wouldn't scold me if I forgot my collar on a hot day, would you?"

"It wouldn't be any worse than curl papers under a boudoir cap," she laughed back at him. "You are so comfortable, Major. If I were younger, I'm afraid I would have fallen in love with you—for no other reason."

"Why younger?" bantered the Major. "We've both had our romances, haven't we? Romance is cruel—and

it generally leaves a scar of some kind. If one survives it, he is all the better for it—just as having typhoid makes one grow big and strong.”

Cousin Em made no reply; Deering and Grace were waltzing by again; they both danced well. She watched them with a little lingering regret for the youth that was gone.

“It looks more promising now,” she waved her hand in their direction. “I suppose the engagement will be announced soon.” The Major looked around, not understanding her allusions.

“Engagement?” Cherry Blossom leaned forward, her eyes serious. “What does it mean?”

“It means they have promised to marry each other,” Cousin Em explained.

Cherry Blossom’s beautiful pink fan fell to the floor, the fragile tortoise sticks almost ruined by the contact. She bent quickly to pick it up; her face seemed suddenly pale and sad, and noticing it, in alarm, the Major arose, hastily summoning Yuri. He would make her adieus; he must insist that she stay indoors. He had warned her against being out so much in the garden in the hot sun.

Deering had remarked her absence immediately. He had been unable to separate himself from Grace, and she was giving a pronounced *impressement* to their being together that it did not warrant, for he resented being placed in a position to which he had to submit, from courtesy.

At his first opportunity, he made his way to the Major’s side, and dropped in the seat his daughter had

vacated. There was still the indefinable, elusive odor of sandalwood about it.

"I trust your daughter enjoyed the party," he said, lamely enough, feeling his way over platitudes.

"My daughter is very young, and not accustomed to much frivolity," the Major replied. "And I have a feeling that I want to keep her so."

The Major was not disposed to confidences, and with ponderous formality, with a mumbled excuse of having letters to write, disappeared.

But chance threw Deering frequently near her. The momentous question or dispute involved in the royal engagement had not yet been decided, and it needed only the slightest ignition, a careless act, an impetuous word from one of the clans, to fan the slumbering flame into a blaze.

Advised by the Dentons, Deering arranged his affairs so that he spent little time in his offices, temporizing until the political clouds rolled away, and it was inevitable that he should pass much of his idle hours with his friends.

There were excuses sufficient, did he need them. Grace had undergone a metamorphosis, falling into little friendly familiarities with him, as if nothing had arisen between them, always devising plans for his pleasure, and with such exactness that he always fell to her.

To him it was meaningless; its value to a casual observer was a matter of supreme indifference, for he had emerged from his tribulation with clearer vision, and he knew now that he had never really loved Grace Denton at all, but was experiencing the usual infatuation that is a part of the discipline of youth.

He seldom had an opportunity to speak to Cherry Blossom. Often he was quite content watching her exquisite flawless face, greedily, hungrily, at a slight distance, the width perhaps of the drawing room, or the broad piazzas, or in the garden; for the Major guarded his charge with much paternal solicitude and did not encourage acquaintances. True it was that already she had become an object of divinity to many of the younger men in the circle, under-secretaries, who often did not fear to trespass the Major's proscribed defenses, and talk with her; and these little acts, simple enough, would be sufficient to rouse all of the savage jealousy of his nature, and he would pass miserable moments until they went away.

Just as her beauty haunted him in busy hours, at day, at night, so did the inexplicable resemblance she bore to his Hishigawa gradually, strongly impress itself on him, and it seemed incredible that two faces could be so much alike, separated by centuries of two hundred years. The droop of the eyes, the radiant, violet purple eyes, was the same; but Cherry had no hesitancy in looking up, though she seldom looked at him; and the beauty of the great artist's time looked down—although he had prayed to see into them. Would they have been the same? There was such a startling likeness in the other features.

One day he watched her in the garden; he had been unannounced, and knew where he would find Mrs. Denton during the golden hours of the afternoon. His surmise proved correct; for they were enjoying tea. But it was Cherry who was solemnly going through the pretty ceremonial, the Cho-No-Yu, or the Honorable

Tea Ritual, showing them gravely the meaning of the ancient superstition. It must be done without the aid of another, or it would lose its potency; the fire had to be ignited from the charcoal; the mat on which the honorable guests knelt, one at a time, must be brushed for the purpose, indicating her pleasure in serving them, then the taper must be applied to the reeds of incense.

It was a colorful picture and held his gaze entranced.

The Shinto Temple at the end of the garden gave it impressiveness; some grotesque demons, rigid in stone, were set among the flaunting red and white camellias. An avenue of glory, rose-colored, late blooming flowers, stretched over to a tiny rustic bridge, and in the pool, in brilliant dashes of lustre, the gold carp sparkled like so many jewels.

Over the ground the pink Neji-bana crept in a heavy carpet, making soft cushions for the feet, and stretching whimsically toward the sun as a child raises its eager face to the sky. The light, delicately tinted gowns of the women made a harmonious contrast.

And in their midst, a glittering, scintillating little figure in a rare, richly embroidered blue and gold kimono, her bronze hair looped high in true Oriental fashion, stood the Major's daughter.

The mounds were the handiwork of man; each was distinguished by a name; it rushed over Deering that he was standing on the Mound of Contemplation, where often laughingly, in the brilliant moonlight peculiar to the tropics during the summer, they had thrown tiny balls of the honorable rice to O-Tsuki-Sama, the honorable Moon, emulating the custom of the country.

He watched the women partake of the Kiss of Brotherhood—after Cherry reverentially pounded the dried tea leaves to a fine powder, poured over it some honorable hot water, and made the sickly looking bright green tea. Her little hands flew rapidly up and down as she vigorously beat it with a tiny bamboo whipper. This finished, Mrs. Ambassador, as she called Mrs. Denton, was the first to enter the pert little pagoda where she had installed her paraphernalia. Mrs. Denton had no faith in ceremonials, but it was certainly a very pretty scene to transpire in her garden, and she was going to have a photograph of it taken to send “back home.” It would make quite a stir among her old friends.

Cherry politely motioned her to kneel down; she must take three sips or be ostracised for ill-breeding; then wipe the rim and pass it very gravely to her honorable hostess, taking great care that her lips fell at the same place.

The Major, his linen suit crinkled from the dampness, rushed out, not understanding its significance, and frowning over his mental inaptitude to grasp it; but he dimly comprehended that it had something to do with the inherent superstitions he condemned. He did not think it right that his daughter should display herself in such pagan actions. With a muttered “Confound it,” he turned away, his eye alighting on Deering, who was enjoying the scene.

“That’s what the priests teach them,” he snapped out, knocking the ashes off his cigar with the tip of his finger. “They lay down the law for their religion, love and family. They’re responsible for the country’s utter

lack of progressiveness, for if you took away their professions, how could they earn a living? It's to their advantage to keep these people credulous. These little brown folks are just as intelligent and clever as any other race, more than many races, but these high moguls purposely stuff their heads with fear, to keep them under their thumbs. Let them break away, and I'll bet you they'd give us a fine run to keep up with them."

"I believe you're right, Major," Deering assented. "But somehow, if you take away all of these little ceremonials from this country, you'd be robbing it of its greatest charm. It belongs here; there's not a jarring note in it. It belongs to the atmosphere of the Old Japan; what do they call it? Yamato damashii. Look, what a beautiful picture this is before us, the garden, the coloring. Your daughter does credit to it. The women are eager to be initiated into the Cha-No-Nu. I'll confess, since looking at it, I feel like trying it myself." He laughed awkwardly, under the Major's sharp eyes.

"Don't be a fool, Deering. It's not a man's game. Women are naturally foolish, being part child that they are. I don't care what they do, but I don't like to have my daughter up for criticism this way. And this Japanese superstition to crush keeps me up in the air."

"I don't see how you can blame her," Deering cried, impulsively. "She has been raised here, imbibed it from her earliest youth. Once she is with girls of her own land it will be unconscious mimicry—the ways she will pick up. I hope, though, that she won't have that opportunity for a long time."

"You mean our return to America?"

"Yes." Deering waited expectantly for a definite relief of his fears as to their departure. Cousin Em's timely appearance from an afternoon siesta spared the Major the inconvenience of a reply, for by nature he was reticent and taciturn and made admissions only when he could not escape it. She linked her arm in the Major's, for the especial benefit of Grace, who was approaching with some of the guests, and they were enthusiastically planning a moonlight ride to Asakusa Park, the Vanity Fair of the Imperial City, to watch the illuminations on the river.

Deering passed on to greet Mrs. Denton; then with more trepidation than he cared to acknowledge, conscious all the time that the Major's daughter was looking everywhere else but at him, he stepped into the pagoda. She turned her face, her cheeks strangely red, gravely receiving his salutation. Then she looked away again.

"You like honorable tea, too?" she asked, in faltering English, blushing again.

"I would like it very much," he said fervently. She waved her little hand toward a brilliant blue cushion.

"Then you kneel, so." He obeyed her instructions, with promptitude. She took the cup of egg-shell china, a dainty robin's-egg-blue affair, and filled it with the green beverage; taking three sips, she extended it in dignified silence to him, and for the second his hand brushed against hers; he repressed a foolish desire to catch it, hold it, letting the cup break into fragments. But instead, with his pulses throbbing at this exquisite proximity to her, both of them kneeling, facing each other on the cushion, looking into her eyes, he pressed his lips

where hers had been on the rim of the cup, and took the required sips. There was one delirious, electric second, a rush of emotion that made him dizzy, and it seemed to him that all the world had passed away and he and she were there alone, reading paradise in that inexplicable, deep, long glance.

"That—the Kiss of Brotherhood, Meester Deering," she said softly, rising and nodding her burnished head.

"That mean you and I always friends."

"Always," he began impetuously.

"Cherry! Cherry!" The Major's strident tones crashed through the beautiful moment, destroying its unwritten ecstasy.

"I say, daughter, hurry a bit. The rickshaws are waiting and you must take off that outlandish dress if you want to come. Leave the things where they are. The servants can bring them in."

Cherry Blossom's little mouth began to droop, childishly. She looked imploringly at Deering.

"I take off my beautiful dress? Why? Other women wear it. It do no harm at all. My dress cannot make me what I am not born, can it, Meester Deering? My honorable father do not like this; you do, don't you, Meester Deering?"

"Indeed, I do; I love it—I mean, I like everything you have," he exclaimed confusedly. How could he think or talk coherently if she looked at him that way, her eyes mutinous, clouded with unshed moisture like the dew on woodland violets. He must evince more rationality; some of the women of the party were listening, and he made a supreme effort to talk sensibly. "I

think your father wants to see you become a real American. Then you will seem more real to him. He has not always had you, you see, and when you are dressed like the young ladies here in Japanese clothes, it makes him feel that you are one of them and not of his own flesh and blood. That is the way it is."

They walked toward the house; through the wide-open hallway, glimpses of the people could be had, the echo of their light laughter reaching them. The rickshaws, or kurumas, were in a long line, each coolie waiting to be summoned by the native house man, Taka. Behind, the big wire wheels of a motor car made a prosaic contrast, in its insinuations of modern comfort.

"I wish I were American lady like those," Cherry Blossom sighed, with sadness flitting over her face. "It isn't all in me yet, Meester Deering. All inside me still Japanese, but perhaps someday I grow better. Everybody like American ladies. They do not mean what they say and men like that. Men do not always like to know what the ladies mean."

Her father's corpulent form blocked the hall as he approached with a wrap. He threw it over her gorgeous raiment, gently pushing her toward the door.

"She'll have time to change her dress," he looked at his watch, as the gaily chattering group began to dart off in the rickshaws. Cousin Em stepped forward with decision.

"Nonsense. She isn't going to change it, Major. I don't see any reason why she should, just because you don't like it. She looks positively charming in it, doesn't she, Jack?"

Deering colored awkwardly.

"I've looked it, if I haven't said it. But I'm willing to repeat it, for your sake."

He scrutinized the driveway; the rickshaws had all disappeared. He had hoped to join in their excursion, delighting in any opportunity that would keep him in Cherry Blossom's company. His face fell in acute disappointment.

"Come," Cousin Em said, with her refreshing authority. "Call your new chauffeur, Major. We're going to try the new car," she explained, catching Deering's expression of surprise. "You and Cherry can sit on the back seat, if you don't mind; for I want to have the Major explain the brakes to me, and the front seat is made for three. Perhaps someday I'll be driving it myself." But the Major did not notice her significant look in his direction; he was very carefully concealing the kimono with an ample wrap. He had the feeling that the influence of such factors prevented his daughter from becoming more rapidly like the girls of his own land. And he did not intend that any differences, geographical or ethical, should separate them.

CHAPTER XV

THE SKY was faintly dark; O-Tsuki-Sama, the honorable moon, was edging in a silver thin crescent over the horizon; soon its rays would spread through the fragrant lanes of trees down which they rolled, enveloping them in its white radiance. Here in the dark, on the bridges, they went very carefully to avoid the bundles of rags, the beggars, who made these spots the place for importunities, for night has its shadows, when the underworld creeps out. Crowds are their haunt, and in the temples, under the cloak of piety, thieves and ruffians ply their vocation.

“Ladies and gentlemen of the east and west, favors to the old sick one,” whined the supplications around them, as humanity swarmed in the park; the cries of the food sellers and the itinerant pedlars of endless variety made irritating discords with the persistent dirge of the Chinese buckwheat seller as he played his flute.

Yet there was charm. In the temple one could take delight in the cheerful decorations, listen to the devout “Hear me, Great Lord Buddha,” clapping the hands in the fashion of the pious ones; and if it is in the daytime when a visit is made, those noisy chirping messengers of the gods, the pompously strutting pigeons must be fed, greedily devouring the handfuls of grain scattered among them.

The protection of the car made the ride more enjoyable; for the throng of pleasure-seekers jostled each other, crowded the paths, and blocked the thoroughfares in an impenetrable wall.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the east and west, favors to the old sick one."

A beggar, bold from privation, caught recklessly at their wheels, just escaping danger. The light of a green lantern fell on his sightless eyes, no worse than the wicked leer of his hideous face.

Deering threw him a coin, to get rid of his repulsive appearance.

The tea houses shone with the glitter of their night allurements. Richly-dressed people sat at tables sipping their honorable cha; or the little cups of saké, tepid and sweetish, like half-warm sherry from a musty bottle.

Once the car gave a lurch as they were forced to come to an abrupt halt, because of an avalanche of humanity before them. There was no danger, but Cherry Blossom had never ridden in a motor before, and to her primitive mind, it was a medium of disaster in its invisible powers of locomotion, its hoarse warning horn, instead of the rasping "Hai! Hai!" familiar to her ears. To be borne on so swiftly, with no labor, no effort, invested it with supernatural attributes. Tomorrow she would do some lantern prayers. But no; she had promised her honorable father hereafter not to perform such penances. He was teaching her that she had only one Supreme God—and he was everywhere, all over the world, and heard everything one said, or even thought. It was very wonderful.

"You're not frightened," Deering's voice, masterful, tender, which always made her heart beat so fast, sounded, interrupting her meditation. He leaned toward her in the dark, and his hand fell over hers, to assure her of their safety. He did not at once remove it; in fact, he was unaware of his action until she gently withdrew hers.

"No, not with you, Meester Deering," her voice replied, and it seemed to him it faintly trembled. Still, he was not positive. There was so much noise around them. In front, Cousin Em's carefully marcelled head, with its bristling Spanish comb, made a landmark, a reminder of discretion. He must not jeopardize these privileges by any blunders.

Cherry Blossom followed the panorama of color with enjoyment. Then suddenly her face took on a look of terror. She drew back instinctively, but not before Shiko's cunning little eyes had seen her, a stone's throw away from them; and the sight of his evil countenance recalled all of her former dread and fear. No matter if she were the Major's daughter; no matter if she were West now, and he East, he had vowed he would do her harm. It was not possible that Hawaka, who was now enjoying prison in punishment for his violations of the law, could have planned all of his treachery alone. She felt confident that Shiko had abetted him.

Her pleasure was gone. She was afraid. She had been so happy, away from all remembrance of those horrible days of fear, and the ride that night with Hawaka behind them. The sight of Shiko was like a foul apparition, that presaged some hovering danger.

And it was all the more dangerous because it was so subtle. Shiko was capable of any crime.

Deering, noticing the expression of her face, misinterpreted it. He was afraid his impulsiveness had offended her.

"You are not angry with me? Have I displeased you?" He tried to see her eyes, but the gloom made it impossible.

"No," replied Cherry Blossom, and sighed. She turned toward him, with a childish burst of confidence. "I go to America with my honorable Major father. That be good," she cried. "That make everything all right."

"No, no; please don't," he forgot his self-caution and caught her hand. "Please don't let them take you away, Miss Lynde. I... I..." He pulled himself up shortly, frightened at his own recklessness. "I hope you will stay," he added more calmly. "Do you know, Japan wouldn't seem the same if you went away."

Cherry Blossom looked peculiarly at him, trembling under the fervor of his voice, her hand on her heart to stop its hurried beating. Something fell smartly on them, hard, small, as Cousin Em leveled a package the Major had given her, toward them. It was some Japanese gods, those fat, ugly little effigies of luck that imply delightful possibilities, which never materialize.

It broke the spell. Cherry touched them gravely; then her fingers slipped off them. She had promised her honorable father to renounce these evidences of paganism, and she must keep her word. She thrust them into Deering's hand as it rested on his knee.

"I give them to you, Meester Deering," she said softly. "It is the god of Happiness."

"There are two—both Happiness?"

Cherry Blossom looked down, and even in that dim light he was amazed at the remarkable resemblance of her drooping eyes to those of the Hishigawa lady.

"There never two Happiness," she enlightened him with gentleness. "Only one Happiness, and that big enough for everything. The other god I not tell you—now. Perhaps, some day."

O-Tsuki-Sama came out of the eastern sky, with a drapery of silver in her glittering wake; her light fell at that moment across Cherry Blossom's face. She looked up into his eyes, *and he saw again that memorable night in his toy bamboo cottage when the thunder-storm had shaken the flimsy structure; and he had thought the Hishigawa lady turned her proud head, ever so slightly, and for once raised her drooping eyes, and looked at him, as he had prayed she would.* He rubbed his hand dazedly across his forehead, tormented by the illusion, fretting over his chaotic thoughts. It was gone, that elusive, mocking suggestion of familiarity. Gone. And supreme in the black velvet of the sky, O-Tsuki-Sama rode with her pageantry of silver and jewels.

The fate that had befallen Hawaka had influenced Shiko into absenting himself from his customary haunts, for his apprehensions and fears, aware of the treachery of which his friend was capable, led him to adopt extreme caution in his every movement. For that reason, like other birds of ill-omen, he chose night for his pursuits, and even under that canopy of darkness, with his innate cunning, made no plans which could arise to later confront him.

The sudden disappearance of Cherry Blossom had affected him more than any episode which had transpired in his life, and it had been punctuated with many, of kaleidoscopic nature, foul and bad. Obstacles, in Shiko's path, were never surmounted. They were destroyed, and if his weapons had been used by another, at least they had been subtle enough to have escaped detection.

His jealousy led him to believe that Matsuki, the Mongolian, who kept the brothel in the Honjo, had at last accomplished his threats and held her captive. Twice had he hired assassins to attack his rival, and each time, as if by dispensation of the gods, the evil bloated-faced voluptuary had evaded the traps, unconscious of the tragedy that stalked behind him.

He then planned a more destructive end for Matsuki. Money could accomplish what neither the gods nor the law could. Matsuki had hitherto played and cheated at cards to secure possession of the girl he loved. Whether he had done so or not, Shiko in his jealous frenzy did not care to know, blinded into swift action as he was. Matsuki had played to win Cherry Blossom with Hawaka. Now, he should play with him, Shiko, the rich one, at the point of his two assassin's guns, for his own life. Losing or winning, the end would be the same. But it gave an aspect of politeness to encourage his victim into believing that his life depended on his own skill in the game.

Shiko chuckled to himself over his plan, and when night came, followed by his well-paid men, who had adopted the guise of travelers, or pilgrims, in their knapsacks and brimmed hats, he led the way to the kichin-yador, their paths apparently parting; for the men

entered, asked for a night's lodging paid their *sen*, and dropped as if fatigued from their day's walking, to the rag of a mat on the floor, stretching out as if for sleep.

Shiko waited until silence prevailed, and he was reasonably sure that the guests of the inn—filthy bundles of grime and tatters, thieves intent on robbing others worse off than themselves, and women of cheap virtue who sought the dive for stray pennies, or *sen*—had all succumbed to fatigue or its semblance. Then, with his arrogant air, he sauntered into the place, not losing a single detail of the room, every faculty alert for quick action, if necessary, his yellow-stained fingers on the hilt of his knife, concealed under his robe. Outwardly his calm was enviable. He saw the man he sought bending over his ledger on the counter, satisfied with his returns. The evil white face, swollen into hideous rings around the glittering tiny slants of eyes, brought into activity all of the fury which Shiko's slight frame could hold, so that he trembled as if from a chill—as a tiger often palpitates at beholding its victim approaching in the jungle.

"Matsuki," breathed Shiko, ingratiatingly, extending the hand away from the knife.

Matsuki passed it by, reaching for the right one.

"You salute backwards," he announced, his eyes suspicious.

Shiko laughed easily. "It is hurt. A nasty wound. Some robber attacked me even so for money—one of those damned Americans, who comes over to our beautiful country to murder even for money. But what can we do? Our lives dedicated to our ideals and the priceless worship of our Imperial Ancestors. We cannot have

blood on our fingers, even for money. I say it is unbearable. I hate them all, with their shaved faces and their ridicule of us, and their tricks in business. La, la; a match, please."

Matsuki acquiesced, disarmed by his friendliness.

Shiko puffed at his cigarette, his left hand holding it.

"Today," he went on, confidentially, "I say, I miss my game with Hawaka. My good friends all disappeared. Where is he? I do not know. I know I am lonely. No one plays games with me—and the geisha. Pouv, one could see them spit into the earthquake holes, for the amusement they provide. Nothing new any more. No new dances, false faces all old. Shiko must live. Shiko must be amused. I pay well for good games, just as I pay well for new amusements. But there is nothing interesting left. Nobody plays the good game Hawaka did. Such skill, such cleverness, such wonderful manoeuvres. I would challenge any man in this world if I knew of any who could play like Hawaka. But there is not one who can come up to him, of that I am certain."

Matsuki leered at him over the counter. His fingers had long, sharp nails, like the talons of a vulture, hooked at the end. He raised his hand in protest.

"Take that back, Shiko. I used to beat Hawaka even not trying to play. Always has he lost to me, the great Matsuki. Hawaka clever at cards? It gives me a laugh; you are so foolish. You have believed him, that is all. Sometime, I show you how I play. I never lose. I play always to win. Then you can talk about skill, when you see Matsuki play."

Shiko laughed noisily. The travelers on the ragged mat rolled over, as if enjoying their rest.

Matsuki's white puffed face reddened at Shiko's insolent, doubting air.

"Some day I will teach you, young man. You cannot make fun of Matsuki's playing. I, who beat that miserable liar, Hawaka. Do you hear me?"

"One cannot believe mere words," said Shiko with his most aggravating manner. His right hand had clutched firmly around his knife. One could never tell, dealing with Matsuki, who believed in no gods. It might not be necessary even to play any game. Self-defense was always justified in the eyes of the law.

"What do you say?" shrieked Matsuki, tearing at his closely cut hair, as if rent with anger. "What do you say, to me the great Matsuki? You believe Hawaka, eh? You believe a scoundrel who never even paid me one sen of what he owed me? You shall see, Shiko, and swallow your own words so that every one of them cuts to the blood in your chicken throat. Do you hear? Now, I will give you a lesson. You will never need one again. Too long have I put up with your infernal words. May the gods shrivel your tongue before another day comes, and the black crows take the carrion of your dirty heart. Here, I open this door. Down there, where nobody knows, we play—you and I—each for himself, life for life. You have doubted my word, just because that miserable Hawaka said so. It is your last night, Shiko." He motioned Shiko to precede him, but he held back smiling, though his heart sounded in heavy labored beats, as he realized his dangerous situation.

"Lead the way, my friend," said Shiko, blandly, bowing low in a polite sweep of his robe on the dirty floor. He shook the folds gracefully, catching them up, preparatory to descending the dark, uninviting stairs. Matsuki turned around, threateningly.

"I am the host. My guest takes the lead." He ordered, with a gesture of his fat, hairy arm.

"As you say," said Shiko, coughing loudly. The travelers stirred on the mats. Matsuki shoved him forward, and ponderously took a step behind him, unaware that the two men on the floor were suddenly aroused to action. They bounded on noiseless feet behind him, and half fell on him as they all cluttered in the dark, on the narrow steps, the trap door resounding with a thud behind them. One of them, the last, had carefully seized the key before the door fell.

The four men tumbled down in the dark, with muttered oaths, until Matsuki, conscious of the miscarriage of his plans, switched on a light from some source, and they stared at each other as if taken by great surprise. The sharp gaze of the foremost traveler had espied something which escaped Shiko, behind him. Hiding under some bales at one end of the room, he had seen the moving form of a coolie, and he had no doubt but that Matsuki kept others posted near, in case of need.

"This man, Shiko, doubts my word, that I, the great Matsuki, beat that miserable scoundrel Hawaka," cried the inn-keeper, in rage, his glittering eyes scintillating sparks of fire in his brutish anger. "I show him. I give him a lesson now that he never forget. Never again can he say that."

"As you say," Shiko bowed with politeness. "May we have some air? The room is close. Opium?"

Matsuki's face grew livid. His long yellow teeth almost bit through the thinner texture of his lips, controlling his unleashed, primitive passions.

"There is air enough for our game. Soon you need no more, anyway," he said, sullenly. "You will enjoy it, my good friend. Here there is no interruption. Nobody can ever hear above. I will be a good host, I can tell you. Sit down." He turned to the men who had followed them down. "Gentlemen, what can I do for you? Another game? It is well. You doubt my word, too? I will play with all. Nobody can say Hawaka played a better game than I. The stakes? I await your word." Matsuki smiled grimly at them, sure of his skill.

"You yourself announced the stakes a few minutes ago," said Shiko, agreeably. "We will not change our host's demand."

"Life for life?" asked Matsuki. He looked at Shiko's thin, sharp face in meditation.

"I was joking," he said, watching the pinched, dissipated face before him.

"One does not jest with death," Shiko said, ominously. "I am too polite to try to change the word of my host. Is it not so, gentlemen? I appeal to strangers to support me. Always have I been taught the Elegant Manners. One needs them dying as much as living, I say."

Matsuki laughed forcedly. His gaze traversed the gloomy room, and, satisfied, fell upon the gaming table.

"As you say," he acquiesced. "You shall deal, so that no one can say that Matsuki did not give fair play. The gentlemen hear. They seem to be good pilgrims, perhaps from Nikko, with the holy spell of the Shogun Tombs on their robes. Ah, my pious friends, you will soon see another Sun-Brightness, with a different kind of a tomb. I am jesting, but we all like a little laugh to relieve the long journey into Nirvana. It is better than a curse. My cards, good Shiko? Thanks. Now it is your play."

The game progressed without a single noise to break the deadly silence. Only the sound of falling cards caught the ear. Shiko's left hand, supported under the robe by his right one, grasped the bits of pasteboard in a vise. Determined to keep up the semblance of interest until the proper time arrived, he was unaware of the frequent sly glances Matsuki stole around the room, as if counting his hidden farces. But one traveler had not lost one movement of those rat-like eyes, nor one gesture of the powerful, brawny arms. For that reason he preferred to bend over the inn-keeper's shoulder, praising his skill at every play, admiring the apparent proficiency he displayed. No one is above the lethal influence of flattery. A dog can be petted into friendliness; a warrior can be subjugated by praise. It was so with Matsuki. Always on the defensive, he regarded every one with suspicion, for there were many whispered affairs which should have brought disaster on his head. Friends or foes, they were all the same to him—although he preferred the open enmity of the latter, being then forewarned. A friend's attack could not be so openly met. The praise of the traveler now pleased him. He felt a

bond of understanding between them because of it. And he made several unusual plays with success, determined to prove his boast.

"You lose; the game is over," he announced finally, tossing his hand on the table, face up. "I have the winner." He shoved his chair back, standing to his full height, an enormous frame, horrible in its animal stamping, the thick, ugly, sensual mouth, the bestial eyes.

He extended a long, hairy arm toward Shiko, his countenance illuminated by a leer.

"Good-bye, my dear Shiko. Your journey is near. But first, please, hand over that knife in your right hand."

"The devil I will," snarled Shiko, jumping in one bound toward him and clutching his arms around Matsuki's neck. "Here, gentlemen, your guns." He laughed uproariously. "My good Matsuki, you thought I was fooled, didn't you? You were going to teach me a lesson, is it not so, my good Matsuki? On the contrary, Shiko will give you a lesson in the Elegant Manners. It is not polite to go first. You shall start out now, and then perhaps you will be waiting to receive me when I do make up my mind to go. La, la." He doubled in his mirth, as the travelers leveled their guns at Matsuki, but one of them kept his eyes as well on the gloomy corners of the room. Something had moved at Matsuki's cry of surprise when Shiko jumped on him. He stood so that his face was looking upon the entire space.

Matsuki laughed long and heartily. In a trice, the room seemed full of creeping human beings, on the floor, in the corners, behind the bales, a small armed body,

their glittering blades held high, their impassive faces devoid of any sign of feeling. Quick as a flash, Shiko's knife plunged deep into Matsuki's side, deeper, deeper—there could not be any failure now, with that ghastly army of murderers around him, and Matsuki must go first. Of that he was determined. The heavy body lunged forward, helpless despite its powerful structure, its mighty arms useless for ever, the wicked, bloated face sealed in its last earthly expression of hatred and passion and fury. The lights snapped out. Knives thrust out in the black pit, curses rang out in pain, as the battle waged. Shiko felt himself actually lifted off his feet and carried bodily, noiselessly, on the back of one of the men. The scuffling of the combatants made their steps as they ascended the stairs unheard. The traveler with the key softly unlocked the trap, thrust his slight body out first, then followed quickly, and locked the door behind him.

"The devil take them all," he passed his benediction on them. "Besides, my good friend Yago, who was to aid me, and who owes me ten yen, cut me with his own knife, the rascal. He can cut for himself down there now, and who ever wins out can eat the others or die of starvation. It is indeed true. No one can ever hear them upstairs. No one knows any one is down there. You and I, Shiko, we only know the truth. Tonight you can buy me some fine clothes like your own. And I would like my own rickshaw, too, a place to sleep, plenty of rice, and when you do not need your geisha, she can amuse me."

The hands of the traveler, his rescuer, grabbed his wrists with such strength that the skin was bruised.

“For what else did I save you, you miserable, white-livered beast? Do you think it was for love of such as you? Do you think it was because I wanted to please the gods? Hear me, now. Understand, will you, that I must live. I saw your knife go creeping after Matsuki’s heart—and found it. You may be rich, Shiko. That could not keep you from the law’s clutches, with other things I know. It was because you are rich I decided to save you, so you can support me. Now, laugh, will you? No more curses from you, my good friend. I ride in your kuruma from now on.”

CHAPTER XVI

DAYS of dread began for Shiko. Always behind him, persistent in its deadly significance, he heard the step of his tormentor, a parasite draining his very life blood, holding his menace over him day and night.

There were no more hours of idle contentment and independence, just as there was no opportunity to arrange with other assassins for his destruction.

It was but part of his punishment for killing Matsuki.

When he caught sight of Cherry Blossom's radiant happy face in Asakusa Park, in the car beside one of the foreigners whom he disliked, it gave him a distinct shock, which momentarily affected him disagreeably, for he realized swiftly that he had murdered Matsuki in vain, and without any real provocation; and that the indiscretion had brought upon him a fate more terrible than he had anticipated in having his secret shared.

All of the ungovernable passion he had entertained for Cherry Blossom was fanned anew into a powerful conflagration of physical and mental forces, and he could no more control this emotion than he could array the arguments of racial differences against it.

He must gain possession of her. His marriage with the daughter of the thread merchant was approaching, and already was his proud father delighting in the gift

of the sable coat, but trivial details of that nature offered no obstruction to carrying out his wishes, and he saw at last a use for Ishito, his persecutor. By offering him a stipend that should place him forever beyond pecuniary want, he could induce him to secure the prize he coveted with a disregard that made him ignore all consequences. He must have her; the charm of her blue eyes, her sunny hair, every contour of her flawless features floated before him continually. Never before had he been denied anything for which he yearned with such fervor. Ishito must make plans at once.

The Oriental has a saying to the effect that evil plans travel on swift feet.

Each day added to the net that was being spread. The prominence of the Moroshito firm in the silk industry gave ample opportunity for inquiries to be made of various attaches of the Embassy, opportunities which provided an excuse for both Shiko and Ishito being on the grounds, and permitted them to linger in the beautiful gardens.

Shiko's cunning saw to it that every step was carefully planned out in advance. He knew exactly where the tiny paths radiated from the Mound of Contemplation, the winding threads of lovers' lanes, where growths of young bamboo provided dense curtains of green.

Once he had watched Yuri and Cherry Blossom herself walk up and down the remote by-ways, his whole being aflame at sight of the girl he loved, impelled to rush toward her and carry her off bodily; but it was not yet time for the consummation of his schemes.

Warfare had begun again between the two clans. Long-repressed savagery burst into renewed activity, and

disorder and riots prevailed. The Satsumas hated the Chu-Shus with an intensity born of generations of injustices.

Time was when friendly relations were enjoyed, and mutual creeds were supported. But now each clan fought independently for its standard of right, and their bitter antagonism was cruelly breaking the heart of the dainty princess whom the boyish Crown Prince loved, merely because the army wished the adoption of its mandates and the navy insisted on the adoption instead of theirs.

A hasty summons from the Embassy impressed on Deering the necessity of abandoning his cottage for the present. Fuji had departed, yet every morning the house was in meticulous order, and edibles for the day were placed on the table. Deering, however, paid no attention to it, but it evidenced the fact that the young Satsuma was somewhere in the neighborhood.

Once or twice his master clapped his hands, to summon him. On one occasion a long, narrow piece of paper fell over the screen in reply. Its apparent imitation of the Practical Letter Writer gave tangible proof that he was still diligently applying himself to education's demands.

Honorable Mr. Foreigner Deering:

Dear Sir: We have been successful in procuring a load of horses, as per your order of the 2nd inst, & they will be shipped next Monday. We trust you they will reach you in good condition & prove satisfactory. This

is to let you know that Fuji I sorry he is a rascal to leave you alone, & hoping you are the same, I am,

FUJI.

P. S.—I cut the chicken very angry and small in the ice box to eat.”

Deering smiled whimsically over the laborious effort at learning. He knew that the boy would return for good when the dispute was settled. So he hastily packed a few belongings, securing what remained behind under lock and key. It was more than absurd to attempt to lock up the cottage, for any one could effect an entrance if bent on it.

He was glad to be going, even for a limited period, as it would be. He was averse to solitude, and Edwards was away on a business trip that took him far inland. He had even missed the signs of his servant's operations in the kitchen, the occasional breakage, and his frequent practice of whistling what he knew of Yankee Doodle, the name of which had impressed him profoundly.

Masculinely, he relished the thought of a lively skirmish, as an observer; and the shower of ammunition it might bring could not harm his cottage. But Mr. Denton was obdurate. He felt he had a certain authority over the young man, because of their home ties—ties which he had hoped all along might be strengthened.

Such beautiful days, golden, languorous, found the family outdoors, and with the privilege of friendship, Deering joined them in the garden. He did not see them all at first; an ornamental bit of scenery, unfamiliar to him, was Yuri in a new blue silk kimono and some very pointed American shoes, of which she was very proud.

The golden-hearted lilies of Japan made a blur of white, fragrant, ivory-petaled, around the pool, shedding their beauty in the last glory of the waning season. But it was not on the lilies his eyes lingered, eager and hungry. The Major's daughter was trailing her hand in the water, watching the foolish carp leap for it in the sunlight. Yuri said a few unintelligible words to her, and she looked up with wide, startled gaze, recognizing him. A bright, rosy flush overspread her cheeks, leaving her suddenly pale. Her bronze head stiffened imperceptibly.

He advanced, his hat under his arm. Then he knew that her little hand was in his, slightly moist from the water, cool, and his pulses were tingling.

"Grace, here's Deering." The Major emerged from behind a very ancient copy of an American paper on the piazza, where he had been invisible.

Cherry Blossom arose, with a chilly precision in her manner, and opened a great purple silk sunshade over her head, walking away. Yuri, an image of respectful adoration, following her.

Grace rushed out, cool and immaculate in her white linen dress. She drew him to one of the grotesque stone benches, near the arch over the toy stream.

"Guess the news!" She clapped her hands girlishly, raising frank eyes to his. "There's one of our ships at Yokohama. Dad says we'd all better go, while the running is good. Mother, too. His official capacity expires soon now that there's a new President in power, and I'm not sorry. He'll follow later on."

"Is—is she—are they all going?" he stammered, feeling as if the entire construction of the universe were crumbling under him, disappointment depicted in his face.

"The Major wants to get her back. He thinks the influences here are preventing her from adjusting herself to her new sphere. Middle-aged nonsense, isn't it? What does a man know, anyway, about bringing up a daughter, all of a sudden like this? I think some one ought to teach him first how to teach her." She laughed merrily, with little charming glances at him which he did not notice; once he would have found them irresistible.

"Jack." She nestled closer to him on the stone bench, with an abrupt drop to seriousness. Instead of her usual somewhat complacent demeanor, her fingers picked in embarrassment at the trimmings of her waist, in a manner entirely foreign to her.

"Jack, dear Jack—I—I have wanted to apologize to you for ever so long, to tell you that I made a mistake—a great mistake—when I refused to let you consider our engagement as serious. I'm sorry. I—I really did not think I—I cared so much. If you still wish it, you can ask Dad now. I am willing, if it is not—not too late. And we will all go back together."

He drew back, disturbed. Her visible agitation made it doubly hard for him. He jumped up, walked back and forth on the pink carpet of the Neji-bana, across the narrow paths, wondering how he could spare her feelings. She had not hesitated to spare his the night of his arrival, and it seemed a long time ago, so rapidly had time filled the gap. There could be no evasions between them now; the truth, of course—but that would be the most cruel of all.

It was an irony of fate that their positions should be so reversed, she the suppliant, he the rejector.

“Grace,” he said, and he spared her the pity of his eyes; “that time you refused to acknowledge me as your lover you destroyed every little hope I had brought with me, all that long, tedious journey here. I was hungry for the sight of you. I was determined to come at any cost, even at the price of offending my father—you know all about that by this time. You didn’t like me well enough then to acknowledge me as the man you were going to marry. You sent me away from you, broken-hearted, crushed by your indifference. God knows, I put in some miserable hours, for I had burnt every bridge behind me in order to come, assuming a debt to my firm that I must repay. I was sent here for a year. That was the price I paid to be near you, Grace. But you didn’t want me. Now, if I make good, I’ll be a junior partner. I’d like to do something to make my father proud of me, after being the failure I’ve been so long. Don’t misunderstand me, Grace, dear. You sent me away that night—and you sent me away farther than you knew—for you sent me out of your life forever. I—I’m going to stay here—alone.”

His voice dragged out feebly over the last word, unwilling to hurt her, as he knew he must. Immovable, white, rigid as the stone on which she sat, Grace listened, while a tiny scarlet spot grew bigger and bigger in each cheek as every word he uttered, kind though it was, cut through her in shame, as kindness can often sting when those we love perform their little obligations from a sense of duty—and not love.

Behind the white cloudiness of her dress a riotous mass of orange-red flowers, tropical plants, made a flame of fire; so might that martyr of Rouen have looked with her pillar of fire surrounding her. But none of it touched the pallor of her face, except the little spots of red, burning, consuming her pride. A cicado, solitary, shrill in its noise, whirled unsteadily on its transparent wing between them. A starling, bereft of its mate, echoed plaintively in the group of bamboos by the Temple.

He had been a brute to hurt her, he admitted to himself in deepest contrition, wincing under the pain in her face. But there could be no flimsy concealments between them any longer. The truth, pitiless in its clarity, stood between them now.

“Grace! Grace!” Cousin Em’s substantial voice issued from the piazza. “Where are the cherries? There’s not a servant left on the place—and the Major is so thirsty, poor man.”

“Cherries?” Grace arose to an upright position, swaying on her feet. She put her hand mechanically to her head; it ached intolerably.

“He can’t drink cherries,” she said, dazed, unable to recall her thoughts into activity. Her mouth was twitching in nervousness; all of her hauteur was gone.

She tottered over the little gravel paths, choking in her shame.

"Oh, Cousin Em." Her arms flew out appealingly, with a little pitiful gesture, as she fell weeping on her neck.

The Major, forgetting his thirst, jumped up with a suppressed exclamation. By mistake he fanned himself with his hat instead of her.

"There—there," he endeavored to soothe her, putting his arms around both of them in his blundering sympathy. "It's that damned heat. I never saw anything like it. It dries you up on the outside and dries you up on the inside. Never mind the cherries, Cousin Em; it's just as good with lemon."

The words floated to Deering as he stood irresolute, near the little Mound of Contemplation, an upheaval of man's skill and artifice, beyond which fluffy pink mats of the creeping Neji-bana were spots of vivid color amid the green. Deep vaulted lanes, trickling with yellow sunlight, made inviting advances. Conflicting emotions disturbed him. He had never felt such an apathetic interest in Grace as now, witnessing her visible signals of distress over his indifference. Had he entertained any latent affection for her, of any kind, it would have sprung into activity at her tears. Instead, a great relief, as if a weight had burdened him, pervaded his entire being, an odd little unchecked jubilation.

He walked leisurely along the fragrant paths, feeling a truant's enjoyment. Suddenly, far off, a coquettish pennant in the woodland, there was a fugitive wave of a brilliant purple sunshade. His heart leapt responsively. Many lapping, noisy brooks separated them, in wide

perspectives, and hedges trimmed in grotesque shapes. But Deering had all of a lover's impatience, thrilled by that unconscious command.

Both Yuri and Cherry Blossom had come into his full view, and he paused to look across the intervening vales and rivulets at them, happy in his reflections. Then, suddenly, without warning, as an ominous thunder cloud sweeps swiftly across the sun's radiant face, obscuring the light, a sharp cry of terror rang out, and surprise held him dumb as two dark robed men sprang upon the two women, and struggled with them.

In a thrice, while his blood ran cold, Deering bounded recklessly over the toy bridges and the miniature lily-ponds, tearing down the hedges in his mad flight, horror-stricken at the sight of the girl he loved attacked by the vicious-looking assailants. It seemed ages as he ran to her aid, every second fraught with the weight of fear, his clothing torn by thorns, his hands scratched.

One wide leap, across a rise of stones, and he landed on the back of one of the men. His arms clutched around the assassin's neck, tightening, until the fellow's eyes bulged from the pressure. Instantly, a torrent of blows fell on Deering's head from the accomplice, who—not releasing his hold on Cherry Blossom, who was half-unconscious and leant heavily against his arm—still had strength sufficient to protect his friend. Yuri, rising half-stunned from the ground where she had been flung, the blood oozing from her face, which had been cut by the stones on the path, slowly struggled to her feet. There was a wild, tigerish gleam in her eyes. Her thin, brown face, impassive in its stoical expression, took on a look of unrestrained fury. She reached behind and grabbed

a blunt, sharp rock, noiselessly stealing behind the man who was rapidly beating Deering into defeat. Already his hands were relaxing in their vise around the throat of the other rascal, his head was sinking down, strength leaving him. One blow more, mighty in its force, and Deering fell smartly to the ground, powerless to avert the disaster.

Yuri raised her arm high, and brought the stone down on his assailant's head with such terrific power that it seemed to crash against the bones as if at the explosion of a cap. There was a moment of suspense on the man's part, his huge arms flew up in the fury of the brute, to grapple with her, then, heaving a deep sigh, expelling one mighty breath, he sank into a helpless heap of rags and dirt.

Cherry Blossom screamed, calling for help, but the flat echo of her voice trembled mockingly around them. Enraged, driven by horror, fully understanding the fate that threatened her charge, and suspecting who was the instigator, Yuri, small though she was, seemed to be given supernatural power. She ran swiftly and picked up the rock that had secured victory for her, and like a brown whirlwind jammed it against the face of the man who was even so seizing Cherry Blossom, preparatory to making a dash for escape with her, and struck blindly at his eyes, at his head, again and again, her tiny frame dodging blows that were aimed at her. It was fortunate for her that his other arm was engaged with the burden he carried, or she might have fared badly. Never once did she relax in her blows, and then, finally, putting out her foot, she tripped him skilfully, bringing his large body down, as might have a brilliant

foe in warfare. Once down, she struck him until she had beaten him into insensibility. Then, true to her sex, Yuri fell over on the ground and cried.

There was no time to be lost. She mastered her weakness with a supreme effort, and arose unsteadily to her feet, and her frail arms grasped Cherry Blossom's heavier body and dragged it slowly, carefully, over the path. It was her only hope. The two assailants would come to sooner or later. Their disability was merely temporary, she well knew. There was no time to think of Deering, unconscious beside them. She would have liked to save him from their abuse, which was sure to follow when they regained their senses. But it was more imperative that she look first to Cherry Blossom's welfare. The slow, gliding movement over the ground, the contact against it, made the friction necessary to restore the girl to consciousness. It was fright which had overpowered her. She opened her eyes and looked blankly at Yuri. Then she raised herself, gradually recalling what had just taken place. Where was Deering? She broke from Yuri's grasp, looking back. His inert body lay silent and motionless near those of the combatants. That was enough. Regardless of all bodily danger, conscious only of the danger that he was exposed to, Cherry Blossom ran back the distance they had come, and supporting him by the arms, tenderly drew his body over the gravel path, breathless over the exertion, her eyes brilliant, her lips trembling. He had come to her aid, regardless of consequences. Yuri, without a word, caught up his feet, and together they reached the house.

Bowing with an ingratiating air, his panama hat in his hand, clad in the latest European clothes, Shiko

stepped out to greet them. Yuri swept by, ignoring his presence. Surprise and rage stamped his dissipated face.

The Major emerged from behind his newspaper on the piazza, regarding the two women with Deering's limp body in mute astonishment.

"My lord!" His pipe dropped to the ground.

"Arrest that man," cried Yuri shrilly. "I know what he has done. He hired those rascals to try to carry Cherry Blossom off. Ask him why, Honorable Mr. Major. Ask him——"

"It is a lie," said Shiko, blandly smiling. "All day have I been inside, checking up some statements of my honorable father with one of the secretaries so that we can make the shipment tomorrow. I can prove it—I call him."

The Major summoned a servant, directing him to call a doctor, and to make Deering as comfortable as possible. Yuri, her arm around Cherry Blossom, followed behind, giving what aid they could, smoothing the pillows, darkening the room. It was Yuri's fingers that washed the white face free from the disfiguring blood spots, and pushed the hair back from his forehead. Cherry Blossom had begun it, in a tender ministration, but the older woman kept the conventions of her land well before her, and nice girls did not perform such tasks for their men unless the honorable engagement were known.

Cherry Blossom sat beside the bed, refusing to leave, her entire being vibrant with the desire to help to comfort him. Once, before the doctor came, behind Yuri's back, she bent over and pressed her lips against his face, a tear falling from her eyes; and it seemed to her there

was the flicker of an eyelash against his white cheeks, acknowledging the unspoken caress.

There was already a great commotion in the house as the news became known. Messengers were dispatched to discover the identity of the assailants and find their whereabouts.

The doctor was announced. Cherry Blossom arose to leave the darkened room, at Yuri's admonishment. She bent over the motionless form on the white coverlet, in her uncontrolled emotion, and her soft lips pressed again on his face, in a deep, parting kiss. She jumped back with a cry of shame; Deering's eyes had opened full upon her, and their glances held together in one brief moment of ecstatic joy. Then his eyes closed again.

She darted from the room. The doctor was entering, with Mrs. Denton and Cousin Em distractedly talking to him, both at the same time, and he turned first to one side then the other, in a polite endeavor to understand both.

Cherry Blossom ran into her room, falling on Yuri's bosom once within. They wept together, in a reaction of feeling, excited over the adventure that had brought such harm.

Outside the Major's voice sounded in conversation with the police.

"Ishito, the one we caught, claims that Shiko planned the whole thing," the officer was announcing, dramatically. "There is a long charge against the wealthy Moroshito's son. Perhaps they are untrue. Maybe not. But Ishito says we will find proof that Matsuki's dead body lies in the pit under the inn in the Honjo. For that reason has Shiko supported him these many months.

But, where is Shiko? All traces of him have been lost. He was here. He knew we had seized Ishito. I cannot understand it."

Taka, the houseman, came in with deliberate grace, and with a low obeisance claimed their attention.

"Honorable Mr. Major," he said, politely, "I have the good fortune to announce that Shiko, the rascal, has just successfully performed the hara-kiri, like the descendant of the great samurai that he was. May the gods do with him what they please. Too long did I, too, suffer from his impertinence and deeds. It is not too late. The great Moroshito, his father, must now give back the sable coat. Tomorrow, Morning Dew and I will be wed, and already we have our tickets bought for the big boat to take us away. Shiko lived a rogue, but he died a gentleman. I do not care that he has ruined the point of my sword."

CHAPTER XVII

FEELING the delicacy of his position, Deering insisted on returning to his cottage at the earliest possible time, despite his mental and bodily weakness.

Somehow, during his gradual return to normalcy, he cherished a belief that he had felt the soft contact of Cherry Blossom's lips against his face as he lay struggling for consciousness at the Embassy; but the thought seemed so preposterous, so absurd, that he finally dismissed it as a figment of his disordered brain, the consequence of the treatment he received.

Yet, though it seemed to have no actual foundation in the realm of tangibility, its elusive, tantalizing spell lingered to solace his idle hours. It did not seem fair to him that the girl whom he loved with all of the intensity of his nature should be taken out of his life by her obdurate parent without some protest. But he knew the Major's determined will that would brook no change, and temporarily he could do no more than submit.

In preparation for the homeward journey, there was great confusion at the Embassy, as trunks were hauled out of storing places and industriously aired, and boxes packed with the innumerable acquisitions of a long sojourn.

He tortured himself thinking about Cherry Blossom, while she made several attempts to see him in order to

thank him for rushing to her defense in the garden. But circumstances, engineered by the Major on the one side and Yuri on the other, each fearing a different disaster, interfered, and the note of farewell Deering wrote her, with its impassioned declaration transmitted between the lines, never reached her, owing to Fuji's carelessness; for he used it for lighting the fire to cook his lord's breakfast. And the verbal messages she sent him by Yuri were forgotten, because of Timi's wonderful advent into public life, in charge of an imposing regiment of Girl Scouts, in trim little brown bloomers and blouses, and with caps on their heads. History was being made rapidly; the new women of Japan were arriving, prepared to assume their duties with new methods. There were no more little mothers seen, burdened by the lusty babies of the families strapped to their immature, weak backs. Instead, enterprising shop-keepers had gaudy new perambulators, which it was a delight to push, for one could then combine marketing with exercise for baby, and stow away various parcels, of the honorable rice, or cha, or bean curds, and deliver all safely at the same time.

Timi was right. A new orator had arisen, speaking for the people whom he represented. A peasant, honored by intellect, and the Diet had conferred the title of baron on him. It was a peerage of the brain. They were going to be married soon, at one of the churches. It had never before happened in the history of the nation that a peasant was made a baron with all honors.

But there were so many unusual incidents crowding their daily lives that ordinary happenings were unnoticed. Nobody paid any attention to Yuri, who

crouched dog-like in dark corners, sad over the imminent parting, and muttering prayers to Buddha that the irascible Major would relent and allow her to accompany them. But on this point that individual was adamant, in spite of Cherry Blossom's tearful pleading. It was high time that all connections with the foster-mother of his daughter ceased, and while he deeply appreciated what Yuri had done for her, and acted for the best as well as she could, yet she was merely an instrument of fate, and he would repay her by settling a very splendid amount of money on her, so that she could always keep Chu-Chu, to whom also he would make a stipend. Then she would not have to abuse her sturdy legs by working them, instead of paddles, in the water ridges, in the rice fields.

It was a long, dreary day, and the carts had already deposited their baggage at the station. A short journey, and they would be in the big, bustling port, and find the enormous ocean greyhound waiting for them.

Cherry Blossom divided her time between weeping at leaving Yuri behind and joy at the thought of Deering being with them, for she imagined that he was to accompany them back to his own strange land, and it helped stifle the little sadness she experienced at the thought of his being engaged to Mees Grace; for otherwise, why was she always with him, and leaning so—with her arm in his?

Yuri was allowed to accompany them to the boat; that was concession enough for joy, and made the rapid journey all too brief. Then they were rushed aboard, boxes and trunks were swung on, as the crew heaved and

shouted; for they wanted to go out on the tide, to save time, and it was necessary to hurry.

In a few minutes they would be off. Cherry Blossom stood at the port hole of her cabin, waving and throwing kisses to poor Yuri, who stood alone on the deck, a pitiful little figure torn by grief.

"Where's Deering? Isn't he going?" she heard her father ask, out on deck, almost in front of her. "I hope he isn't late."

"He's not coming," Cousin Em said, in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Not coming? What's the reason, Grace?" He looked around in surprise. He had taken it for granted, seeing the two continually together.

"I don't know," she tried to reply lightly, but the flippancy sat awkwardly on her. "Don't ask me." The silence that followed was expressive.

"Well, you women are queer, I must say," the Major growled.

Cherry Blossom listened eagerly. Her tender heart, anticipating delight just from the knowledge of his being on the same boat, gave a bound, then sank. He was not coming. She could still manage to see the dim outlines of Yuri's little form, in the waiting room on the pier—a shapeless figure in its national dress which so irritated the Major—and a great longing for her dear brown face and comforting arms shot through her vibrantly. The two people she loved the most in the world would be left behind. Tears rolled down her cheeks in despair.

The crew was hauling up the anchor. There was still time to decide. The new world was unknown and

unreal, a nebula of undreamt dreams and hopes, perhaps disappointments. It held no allurements for her.

Her hands trembled as she caught up her new suitcase and stealthily crept out in the darkness, stooping so that the Major would not recognize her. No one saw her as she scampered swiftly back over the gang plank. There was a little smothered, tearful cry as she was engulfed in Yuri's loving arms again. The giant smoke-stack sent forth a deep-throated sound as the huge monster vibrated under its power; there was a rush of waters as it ploughed its way through; and then, with majestic grace, it turned its prow toward the sea, gliding like a phantom ship in the distance, until it disappeared in the spray of the waves.

CHAPTER XVIII

DEERING had resumed his duties at his offices, for the clash between the clans had resolved itself into an artistic bit of Oriental diplomacy manœuvred as it was by the mighty but invisible forces behind the throne. Often, he cherished the hope that he might be hurt by a stray shot, for it would be a pleasant release from the burden of his thoughts; but the clash was descending from gunpowder to words, which are always mightier than the sword, and the worm-eaten, ancient regime of the Elder Statesman Administration was being denounced by the opposition party, resignation following resignation in the Imperial household.

Feeling unequal to the ordeal of bidding the travelers good-bye, he had dispatched his farewell by note, which later he discovered had never been delivered. However, he could not argue that it made any difference, for he had decided that such trivialities as distance could not keep him away from the Major's daughter, even if parental obstacles did; and instead of completing the year he had pledged himself for here, it could easily be condensed into half that time. For love cannot be controlled by latitude and longitude, and he would follow them.

He wished that either Edwards or Fuji would return, to make life more bearable, for continuous solitude,

giving free opportunity for the mocking return of memories—only memories, for there had never been anything tangible that his affection could feed upon in the intermittent meetings he had had with Cherry Blossom—was testing his powers of endurance, and he did not see how his fortitude would be capable of longer or greater trial.

Then one night an Oriental etching showed itself against his screen, and resolved itself into the recreant Fuji, who as usual with a loud clearing of his throat began to read his latest literary effusion, prefacing it with the familiar copied letter about the load of horses. For to him that was the manner in which all polite letters evidently began; for was it not given in the honorable book? He had returned anxious to again kill the honorable fish for him; and he did not want his honorable lord to cut him up in his wrath. He was very sorry he had run away; he knew he was a black dog, and hoping that Honorable Foreigner was the same, he read off his name, Fuji. He looked toward his master for praise of his scholarship, with a deep obeisance to the floor.

“In fact, you mean to say you’re sorry you ran off?” Deering asked, with a tolerant smile. “Save yourself the ink, Fuji—and please remember I’m not buying horses. It’s all right, my boy. You can stay, but the next time I’ll not take you back—remember. Now proceed to your honorable work. There’s a stack of dirty dishes waiting for the honorable dishpan, and I have a very honorable appetite for some hot coffee and toast. Be off.”

There was a noisy commotion outdoors. In the darkness, rockets flashed across the sky in gleaming serpentine flight, trailing their fiery splendor in their wake, not a whit less bright than the twinkling stars. Music, discordant for the most part, bands collected in haste, sounded in unison, as if the marchers were parading the streets.

Fuji, forgetting his promises, dashed out for news; he came back with eyes shining with delight, breathless over the information. The royal betrothal was upheld. The proud naval clan, his clan, the Satsumas, had won! Twelve lantern prayers for him that night, even if it kept him awake till dawn; and there would be two dishes of rice with the stick of senko on the shrine of the Imperial Ancestors. His clan had won! A new Imperial minister had been appointed. The great god Buddha had smiled on them.

"Thank heavens." Deering stretched himself out full length on the floor, in want of a better place, his head on a zabuton, fingering for his pipe. "Now we can resume our honorable housekeeping. Proceed to the kitchen, Fuji, and begin."

When the boy finished he would clap for him to come in; he did not want to be alone; his thoughts were poor company, even worse. He felt he must talk with someone, hear a human voice, or he would go mad.

He had mentally traveled every inch of the way back on the boat with the little party. He had imagined how the Major's daughter would look on deck, as her eyes beheld the sea and the huge green waves; her pleasure in the innumerable comforts of the big ship. Then,

her first vision of the land she belonged to. Would she like it?

She would attract attention, admiration everywhere she went, and little stabs of jealousy made his blood run hot. What a fool he was to sit and dream of her, separated each day by a greater distance.

He sat up, crosslegged, trying to shake off his mood. The heavy curtain that concealed his picture hung where it caught his gaze. He recalled Fuji's promise to have the painting mended, in some miraculous fashion; he knew it was not there, but unable to resist the temptation, he drew it aside, as the lantern from the inner room emitted a dull light that would enable him to see.

He stepped back with an exclamation of surprise and delight.

It was there; the Satsuma, careless in many promises as he was, had at least fulfilled one.

It impressed him anew that it bore a striking resemblance to the Major's daughter. He stood near it, carefully studying the outline of the face, the curve of the mouth, and the wistful droop of the eyes. He loved it—and he knew that it was because he loved the Major's daughter, because it resembled her.

"My dearest love." He fell rapturously on his knees before it, his arms outstretched.

The inscrutable brown face of Fuji appeared politely at the door.

"Honorable Mr. Foreigner call?" he asked, with a bow. "Saké? Cha?"

"Nothing." Deering's senses rebounded into their proper adjustments again. He stepped out in the cool

air, controlling himself. He would soon be the lunatic he was acting if he did not pull himself together.

The hyperbolic description of the Hishigawa Kichibei portraits recurred to him:

“Eyes like the lotus-blossoms courting favor;
Lips like the smile of a red flower.”

What incomparable euphony this race was capable of in its phrasing; to link words thus together like pearls on a thread of gold. He stepped out into the darkness, towards the red and green lanterns on the Ginza. Around him a happy, merry-making crowd moved, rejoicing in the royal betrothal. Flags waved from stalls, banners and pennants were strung across the streets. Like the sun, emerging from behind a bank of clouds in sullen gloom, the sudden festivities made deserted teahouses rapidly fill with gaily-dressed visitors; the flower sellers came out of hiding places and resumed their stoic march up and down with their calls of “Hasa-no-hana.” The figures of pretty musumees, with glistening lacquered hair, trotted past in pigeon fashion on tiny clogs. Blind old samisen players moved out of friendly shadows, afraid no longer. The temple bells rang, for prayers of thankfulness.

“Bandi! Bandi! Four million years of happiness!” shouted the little ones, as they clamored to pass the wonderful god Jizo, who brought them gifts.

He thought of poor little Flower Garden—and her last sad journey to the Jizo.

“Four million years of happiness!” Lusty treble voices rang out around him.

He stepped, uncertain as to his reasons, into Osaka’s qffshop, idly passing the time. Deering had a peculiar

impression of touching moist objects, rubbing against them in the dark; odors or paint, turpentine. But he did not analyze it, for the aged dealer, rubbing his thin, wrinkled hands, was approaching him, taking shape out of the dark; and he was very deferential and polite, for he did not know yet whether he had come to praise him or to denounce him.

Deering jumped at once into the subject nearest his heart. He had paid very little attention to the garrulous old dealer in curios when he recited the legends of the great artist's paintings. He listened very carefully now, as Osaka assumed an air of profound wisdom, for he knew them completely by heart.

When the great Hishigawa lived he painted the spirit in the picture. A samurai loved a Hishigawa lady many, many years ago; and his love burnt so that her heart caught fire, and she stepped out of the frame. And they lived in Paradise ever afterwards. There was no reason why Honorable Foreigner should not win a Hishigawa lady, too.

Deering laughed in scorn.

"You're mad, too, Osaka," he derided him.

"Why not?" Osaka shook his head blandly, undisturbed at the compliment.

"Did not the chaffinch step out of the frame, leaving a hole?"

"Confound that chaffinch—do you think that would convince me, man?" He moved away, his hands in his pockets, but Osaka ran lightly after him, putting one brown hand on his arm to detain him.

"She will answer you," he nodded his head sagely. "I have it here in the book how to win her. Wait, I get

it....” He disappeared in the rear, returning with a small leather book which he opened with great awe. His sharp little eyes ran over the pages, seeking the information he wanted.

“It say Honorable Foreigner must put a cup of wine before the Hishigawa lady—wine bought at 100 different places. Then you offer it to her in the name of love and she will step out of the frame herself, to drink the wine and so she steps into his world.”

“Nonsense!” Deering scoffed at such absurdities, taking his departure. He confessed to a certain amount of inanity and foolishness, but that did not represent such an inferior mental state as the suggestions the Oriental made. He would be content in the possession of the ancient work of art; for surely the sense of ownership was sweet enough and offered small substitute for what it mysteriously represented to him. He could not disassociate it with Cherry Blossom, and in an inexplicable manner the one made him think of the other until his head whirled in confusion.

The gay lanterns, brilliantly orange, vivid shades of blue and green, combined with the white glare of electric lights, gave a warm radiance to the streets. Crowds passed by, engrossed in their customary night shopping; hatless, the echoes of their laughter, of voices, mingled with the vibrant sounds of *samisens* as aged musicians held out their hands for money. Little groups of students, boisterous, merry, paused to chat with unattended *musumees*. In the shadows, *geishas* lingered, following their masters.

A cloud of incense, fragrant, dense, poured out of a temple at the corner; the bronze bells rang softly, mellow

in their tones, reminding the delinquents of their promises.

"Namu Amida Butsu," the pious ones were praying within, clapping their hands over their devotions. "Hear me, Great Buddha."

A sob, stifled, despairing, arose above the clamor; two little figures, grotesque in their paint and finery, tottered by, in the grip of an older person—a man of evil countenance, who roughly jerked them forward as they dragged behind, unwilling to accompany him. Behind them, a shapeless object in the dark, was their mother, unmoved by their tearful implorations.

There was something familiar in their appearance. Deering stared at them, filled with pity. They were the younger sisters of Climbing Rose and Butterfly, being driven to their horrible fate.

"Hasu-no-hana." A flower pedlar thrust his fragrant boxes in front of him, misconstruing his actions. He shook his head without speaking. The grief of the two little girls affected him deeply, but he knew he was powerless to help. Children in years, compelled to obey parental command, they had no alternative. The presence of the mother in the rear, determined, adamant, bent on obtaining sufficient yen to live in comfortable circumstances, and provide offerings to the gods, no matter on what conditions, made their plight hopeless. There was no alternative.

Crowds made merry around them, not aware of the tragedies brushing by. It was merely an incident, soon forgotten, a custom upheld by traditions.

The Thunder Gate opened to receive them, as it did thousands of others. Behind the latticed fronts some

of the favorites sat, their red and purple silk kimonos marking their vocation, their glistening lacquered hair decorated with expensive jeweled pins, their lips outlined with scarlet. A head might be turned, arrested by the tearful cries; but it would only be for the second. Memory—pity—sympathy—all are gone in the Yoshiwara. Nothing matters any more. One must live.

The body is the City of the Nine Gates. It does not make any difference how one treats it, for it is merely the dwelling place of the soul, and is occupied but a short time, on its road to Nirvana.

The bronze bells of the temples rang out, invoking offerings.

“*Namu Amida Butsu*,” sounded the prayers. “Hear me, Great Lord Buddha.” One must pray, appease the gods, worship ancestors. Nothing else matters. It is the soul that must be cared for.

CHAPTER XIX

FUJI had retired when Deering returned. An odd oppressive stillness made far distant noises more acute. The whine of a dog, prowling outside, pierced the ominous quiet, in sharp, apprehensive notes. There was no breeze, neither was it sultry, but the strange atmospheric condition seemed to hold all life and animation in breathless suspense. Even the clamoring mushi-kiki were silenced for once, held in abeyance by fear.

Deering did not proceed to bed. He knew he would not sleep. He made himself comfortable, in the dark, smoking, trying to reject the foolish words of Osaka, which came back to him with dogged persistency. But he resisted the temptation to put the experiment into execution, though its whimsical ceremony, which he knew could be nothing but the credulity of ignorance, appealed strongly to a latent vein of romanticism. The awe of the midnight silence, the intimate communion with the beautiful Hishigawa lady, in isolation from all else while the world lay sleeping, combined to throw a spell over him, clouding his saner senses. He felt reckless as to consequences.

It would make a pretty homage to the old master's art, genius that had excelled all others in two hundred years, incomparable in its puzzling, glowing life-tints and rich pigment.

He had no means of purchasing wine at 100 different shops, as the legend demanded. However, he stealthily groped his way, searching for some bottles, and his hand trembled as he poured out the liquid. In the dead of night, alone, it was not without a feeling of awe that he raised his head, and held up the cup as he had been told to do to the exquisite face in the canvas.

"My dearest, dearest love." His voice repeated the words in tenderness, for he caressed the thought that it was in reality to the Major's daughter he was offering it, and not to the unresponsive canvas.

There was a moment of intolerable dread, as if heaven and earth were pitiless, as the Oriental says. With a sickening, horrible fear he saw the tiny house rock, almost pushed from its supports, and the American chairs scraped back and forth over the floor. In the adjoining room the china fell with a din.

With cosmic force, he felt as if he were being swung around in a never-ending circle, the walls moving with him as if a mighty hand grabbed the frail structure in destruction.

There was a scream of terror from Fuji, now thoroughly aroused. He sprang like a madman, running for safety to the open shoji, clinging to it, shaking as if from ague, in fright.

"Jishin, Jishin. The big fish is trying to throw the earth off of its honorable back," he shouted over and over, his eyes bulging with fear, as tree tops snapped outdoors, and a wide fissure rent the ground. "It is the wrath of the gods. The gods are angry that the Chu-Shus lost. Tomorrow there will be two sticks of senko with the rice—and perhaps a live fish."

It was the earthquake.

Again the bamboo building rocked and creaked, only to fall back again in convulsive movements on its foundations; and this time all of the furniture went slipping pell-mell in confusion, smartly bumping into each other, upsetting, adding to the fearful sensations.

And then something happened. As Deering looked around, amazed at his own calmness, the large frame of the Hishigawa picture fell down with a mighty crash.

And as Osaka had said, the beautiful woman in the canvas stepped out, and came to life.

This time his eyes had not deceived him.

He almost thought he heard the rustle of a garment as she rushed by him, and he clutched at the receding figure as it swayed towards the shoji, but his hand was paralyzed in astonishment.

He forced himself to action, springing after her.

"It is the wrath of the gods," Fuji whimpered, crawling toward his screen, in order to repeat some long-neglected prayers. It had fallen down, but he pushed it in place, holding to it tenaciously as it glided over the floor, carrying him with it. "Tomorrow I do a lantern prayer seven times, and put a big fish on the shrine."

But his honorable lord gave no heed to his admission of knavery. He reached the shoji, catching the Hishigawa lady by her dress. She struggled, frightened, as if unwilling to be held captive on earth.

But love is masterful, and with the most conflicting emotions of mingled doubt and belief, Deering drew her slowly into the circle of his arms. His hand, half unconvinced as he was, fell firmly on hers; for a second

it fluttered away, then lay again in his. It was very velvety—and warm—and human.

He dared not look at her. He was eager to, but afraid. His arms made a strong prison around her, and she tried to disengage herself, but he held her fast.

"There is no use trying to leave me now," he said, his voice thick with some of his repressed emotion. "You are mine, whoever you are, living or dead. You are mine—mine—mine. Don't you know I love you? I am mad over you?" And in the dark he bent his head and kissed her.

Fuji, having appeased his conscience by many tardy pledges, as the wicked jishin gradually subsided with less frequent recurrences—and whose courage increased with its decline—remembered to light the lantern and swing it on its hook on the wall, flooding the room with its weird green glow.

The Hishigawa lady, embarrassed at her predicament, hid her head against Deering's arm. He drew her slowly into the light, raising her face. Her eyes drooped down as in the picture; there was still that remarkable resemblance that he loved in it. The soft-tinted kimono traced with cherry blossoms was identical with the one in the canvas; the same bunches of the flowers decorated her head at the sides. She opened her eyes—and looked at him—

And then he remembered.

It was the Major's daughter.

"Oh, Meester Deering." She stretched her hands toward him for clemency, not understanding the severity of his expression. "Meester Deering, forgive," she

sobbed aloud, overcome by shame because of her deception.

"Forgive—I, forgive you?" His voice trembled; his arms still held her; the loud, irregular beating of his heart sounded against her cheek. Cherry Blossom began to cry, her tender heart broken, afraid of his displeasure. Fragmentary recollections returned to him, revealing everything to him.

He could not entirely adjust himself to the rapture of it, struggling with the surprise it gave him. And she had been here—with him—all of those terrible, lonely days, when his heart ached for her, and he had not known it. It was pity for himself that lent his countenance its look of austerity that frightened her.

He gathered her closer to him, unable to speak, only aware that love surged through him like a powerful stimulant, making his pulse throb, and he had no power to check it—nor did he want to. He had the girl he loved in his arms, and he would never let her go.

Fuji cleared his throat in warning behind his screen. Yuri, representing the honorable propriety as established by the Sho-rei Hikké, was anxious to go; the honorable love was very nice for young people; but she was more concerned about Chu-Chu and her fat legs, which could not carry her far if the jishin upset their house.

It had no effect. Thereupon he sang discordantly:

"Cha, Cha,
Chan, Chan,
Yoitomosé, Yoitomosé,
Chan, Chan, Chan—
Come, let us dance the Dance of the Honorable
Garden.

Who cuts the bamboo at the back of the house,
My sweet lord's own bamboo, the first he planted.
Come, let us dance the Dance of the Honorable
Garden."

Soon he must prepare breakfast, and there were stubborn skins to remove from the honorable bacon; for that had he always used his master's pocket-knife, while he blissfully slept, unconscious of the damages being done; and there was also a fish to be cut into angry pieces, very small.

The great Hishigawa picture lay on the floor where it had fallen. Deering raised it to an upright position. Then he gravely put Cherry Blossom's face in the hole again, until it became a part of the painting.

She was afraid her deception had displeased him; he could surmise that from her troubled eyes. He bent his head and kissed her—as he had longed to do during the long days that had passed—to reassure her. Then he drew her out again into his arms.

"Dearest," he said tenderly, "I—I found out what that little god was you gave me that night; it was Gekkawo, the god of marriage. We'll make it come true." Something dropped from his pocket, as he drew it out, and rolled noisily on the floor. He picked it up hastily, without releasing her, coloring in confusion; but not before she had seen it. It was Jizo, the god of little children.

Outside, cries of terror, screams, the terrible din of falling buildings cut through as if the skies above the earth had fallen. The crimson of flame sent ruddy glows in through the shoji of the tiny cottage, snapping,

crackling in their greedy, devouring power. Old buildings gave way into ruins as so much paper. The licking, rushing fires burnt out hideous memories of cruelty and sin and shame. The lust-house of the Yoshiwara, a terrible monument of man's sensuality, a mass of vivid fire and alive with terror-stricken humanity, for one moment glittered in the black night, vivid, like all sin, tottering on its foundation of vice, and was swept into the oblivion of the ruins with all the rest.

Timi's prophecy had come to pass. Timi was right. Like a wonderful mirage, a hope for the future, one saw a beautiful new city rise out of the debris, smiling little children, tiny armies practised in the march, woman emancipated, leading, where once she was forced to follow.

Cherry Blossom clung fast to the loving arms that held her. Here they were safe. Bright before her, painting the future with a glorious pigment that would endure for all time, years of happiness stretched, with the man she loved.

Fuji sang all the louder. The honorable love was all right, but after the shock of the terrible jishin a cup of tea would be very refreshing, so he emphasized the words of his song, to command their attention:

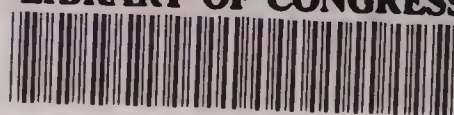
“Cha, Cha,
Chan, Chan,
Yoitomosé, Yoitomosé—
Come, let us dance the dance of the Honorable
Garden.”

THE END



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